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A CORNER IN SLEEP

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A CORNER IN SLEEP

AND

OTHER IMPOSSIBILITIES

BY

E. E. KELLETT

Author of "Jetsam, Occasional Verses"

LONDON

JARROLD & SONS, 10 & 11, WARWICK LANE, E.C.

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A CORNER IN SLEEP.

I.

A CORNER IN SLEEP.

I HAD long been convinced that more than half the woes of mankind are to be attributed, not to an innate depravity in human nature, not to the perversity of matter, not to woman, but to wakefulness. Were the world always to remain asleep, it is tolerably certain that no evil would be committed, or at any rate that its effects would be inappreciable. Even a tooth-extraction, that worst of all horrors, loses all its objectionableness if the patient can remain asleep during the operation. Nor is the case less obvious with moral sores than with physical. Burglaries, for example, are usually committed by those who are abnormally wakeful. Infanticide is due to the sleeplessness of babies, causing sleeplessness in their elders. Almost every crime, indeed, for which society is at such pains to capture and punish the criminal, is done during the waking hours of a man who, villainous as he may be while awake, is innocent enough while asleep.

I thus saw that the one step necessary to insure

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universal happiness is to plunge the whole human race into perpetual sleep. This, however, in spite of the laudable efforts of preachers, lecturers, and schoolmasters, is as yet a consummation rather to be wished than to be attained. But it is even now possible for everybody to endeavour to increase the quantity of sleep in his vicinity, and thus to hasten the coming millennium. I wrote several papers with this object in view—an object which I am happy to say that many of them attained.

But I did not content myself with mere theorising. I gave the subject of sleep, in all its branches, my close and steady attention. I speedily found that common ideas are as erroneous on this question as on most others. Ordinary people, for example, imagine that, however much or little one man sleeps, another man's hours of oblivion are by no means shortened or lengthened in consequence. My researches soon led me to a diametrically opposite conclusion. By a series of observations, extending over a long period of years, I was led to perceive that sleep is a form of energy, and that, as is the case with other forms of energy, its quantity is constant. Every sleepless night, in fact, endured by one man, is due to the too profound somnolence of somebody else. It would be tedious to enumerate the lengthy scientific processes by which I worked out my results. Suffice it to say that I was able, by my "morphometer," to detect the degree of profundity with which any person sleeps at any given time, and to register the consequent waste of the morphic fluid. By an

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elaborate system of curves and drawings, also, constantly corrected by experiment, I marked not only the intensity but the actual quantity of sleep present in a given space at a given time. This sleep might be actual or potential; but in either case my instruments detected its presence and recorded its amount. Still further, I found that the subtle morphic fluid might be caught, as the lightning has been caught, shut up, condensed, diffused, and dissipated at pleasure.

I must confess that some of my results were sufficiently startling. The average amount of sleep at the disposal of any person I found, after careful elimination of disturbing factors, to be at present about 7.83 hours per diem. Owing to the large consumption of sleep on the part of the very young and the very old, the adult human being is forced to put up with far less than the normal quantity. Hence the weariness of the ordinary adult. Yet worse, I was compelled, slowly and against my will, to the recognition of a sort of Malthusian doctrine, applying to sleep much as that of Malthus applies to the foodstuffs of the earth. Just as the population is encroaching all too rapidly on the edible stock of the globe, so, I was led to fear, it was encroaching on the store of morphic energy in the world; and the process is advancing at an alarming rate. Already we sleep sensibly less than our ancestors, and it seems but too certain that our descendants will sleep less than we do; till finally the whole race will perish of insomnia.

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On this subject I issued a warning pamphlet, which, as my instruments soon informed me, only increased the evil it was designed to prevent; for the amount of sleep consumed after my pamphlet appeared was quite out of proportion to the extent of its circulation. In other respects, no one seemed affected by it. I was Noah preaching to the antediluvians. People went on wasting sleep, if possible, with even more recklessness than before. A few jocose remarks were made in the papers, to the effect that so long as I would continue to issue pamphlets, there was no danger of sleep ceasing to flourish; but apart from these feeble witticisms, I might never have written. I soon saw that the only thing to do was to secure myself a sufficient quantity of the morphic fluid to render sleep a certainty under all ordinary emergencies, and to leave the scoffing world to look after itself. So Noah, after preaching in vain for years, finally satisfied himself with building an ark for his own family.

Accordingly, availing myself of my scientific knowledge, I began to collect supplies of the precious energy from all sources, and to store it up for future use. I had a private fortune of my own, a large part of which I expended in this manner. I laid on accumulators and condensers in every place where sleep manifests its energy most distinctly. Every church and chapel in the neighbourhood was visited by my secret agents, who in the guise of plumbers, organ-tuners, or vergers, collected the potent force, and stored it up according to my instructions. The

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wakefulness on the part of the hearers thus induced was a great satisfaction to the preachers, who, ignorant of my exertions, ascribed to their own eloquence the unwonted attention of their congregations; but it was far from being equally acceptable to the sufferers themselves, who could not imagine why the accustomed narcotic was failing of its effect. The result was that many of them ceased attendance at church, but with equally little success; for my envoys, dressed as chimney-sweeps or tax-gatherers, had invaded their houses and cleared the fluid effectually out. Almost every public dinner was also laid under contribution; aldermen, who had hitherto enjoyed a regular siesta after their meals, found themselves, they knew not how, deprived of their accustomed solace; and afternoon naps, though painfully wooed, became a rarity. Diligent as were my coadjutors, I myself was not idle. I even tried reading my pamphlet, or large portions of the Ring and the Book, to my friends, taking care to place the accumulators under their chairs during the performance, to receive the morphic fluid thus generated, and prevent it from running off into its natural channel. It was an exquisite pleasure to me to watch them composing themselves to somnolence, but, to their horrified astonishment, finding the expected slumber constantly eluding their grasp. The simile of Virgil was reversed: sleep fled from them as the ghost of Anchises fled from Æneas. I gained large stores of the energy from my own family, whom I dosed with morphia, chloral, paraldehyde, laudanum,

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and sulphonal, enough to have made Rip Van Winkles of the whole tribe of them, while the faithful accumulators, ranged under the bed, carried off the resultant sleepiness, and condensed it for future service. My wife, in particular, complained terribly of insomnia; and no wonder, for I found it exceedingly easy to divert all sleep from her eyelids without arousing suspicion. But my most potent device was to collect all the cats of the district, and by scientific means send them to sleep during the daytime, in order to turn them loose at night, as wakeful as owls, in the back-gardens of my neighbours. The amount of potential slumber I thus secured, within a very short space of time, was so enormous as to necessitate the enlargement of my reservoirs, and to fortify me against all dread of future sleeplessness.

It is needless to say that throughout all this excessive toil nothing could have sustained me but the consciousness that I was a public benefactor. I spent large sums of money, and a great deal of time, in gathering together this quantity of power; and felt assured every night, as I laid my head on the pillow, with the discharging pipe of my accumulator carefully opened beneath, that some day I should be recognised as the saviour of the world from a ruin never suspected as possible. But for the approval of my conscience, indeed, I believe even my scientific skill would have failed to secure me the regular and peaceful slumber which I enjoyed every night.

Very shortly, as may be imagined, the town in which I lived was visited by a terrific sleep-famine,

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the like of which had never been known. The consequent misery, worse than was ever caused by plague or poverty, was such as more than to confirm my conviction that wakefulness and evil are convertible terms. The people were ghastly to behold; thin, haggard, and worn-out with watching, like nurses who have been contending too long with disease, or as one may fancy the Wandering Jew looked after waiting in vain a thousand years for death. As for myself, I flourished like a green bay-tree in the midst of the general distress. My healthy appearance naturally attracted the attention of the populace. From time to time I was stopped in the street by a woe-begone and sunken-eyed passenger, and asked how I contrived to remain so bright and cheerful, when everyone else seemed as if smitten with a curse. To such questions I returned at first evasive replies; but later I conceived the idea of making pecuniary profit out of this state of things. I have always thought it the right, nay, the duty, of every man to make what terms he can with others, and to get the highest prices possible for goods he happens to possess. Joseph, for example, did not sell for nothing the corn he had stored up against the lean years. In a famine, no man is blamed for asking a high price for a loaf. Similarly, if a man could obtain possession of all the air in the world, he would be able to sell it at almost any price he chose to ask. Accordingly, I saw no reason why I, who had practically a monopoly of sleep, gained by my own prudence and energy, should not recoup myself at

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the expense of people who had neglected my warnings. I therefore caused it to leak out that I had stores of sleep laid up for many years, with which I was willing to part for a reasonable consideration. I had, in fact, established what the Americans call a "corner" in sleep; and the opportunity had come to realise. My accumulated sleep would indeed bring me in wealth literally beyond the dreams of avarice; for I could make it impossible for even avarice to dream.

In no long time the town was thoroughly acquainted with the fact that sleep to any quantity desired was to be obtained from me on reasonable terms, and that it could be laid on, like gas, at any house, the owner of which was willing to meet me on equitable conditions. The price fixed was sixpence for every half hour—terms which I venture to think exceedingly moderate; but I reserved to myself the right of turning off the sleep at any moment that suited me. It is needless to say that at first the populace jumped at my offer. Sixpences began to pour in in multitudes: in a very few days I had enough money to enable me to vie with princes. I laid on sleep at the various houses of the town, and honestly fulfilled my self-imposed conditions. For every sixpence my workers were instructed to allow half an hour's slumber; for half a crown three hours; and for a sovereign thirty hours, with a reduction for families. The people began again to enjoy the unbroken slumbers of which they had been so long deprived. But alas! such is the ingratitude of human nature that ere long they

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began to murmur at their benefactor. Some wretches began to whisper that it was I who had robbed them of their sleep in the first instance, and that I ought to be compelled to refund it gratis. Why, they asked, should I be growing rich at their expense? Why should I be flourishing, while they, to whom my prosperity was due, were starving? I was utilising the unearned increment, they cried in their Socialistic frenzy. It was in vain that I pointed out that they had only themselves to blame; that if they had heeded the warnings of my pamphlet the trouble would never have arisen. Certain expressions I used —I had been unwise enough to write to the local paper—were tortured into admissions that I had stolen the morphic fluid. My wife, also, was not as discreet as she might have been; and I became as unpopular as benefactors of their species usually are. The little boys hooted me in the streets, and the older people reviled me in the newspapers. In a moment of irritation I threatened if these attacks did not cease, to shut off the supply of sleep; whereupon I was told to do my worst. Jones, a political opponent, even suggested lynching. What was still worse, one of my workers, stung by some remarks of mine upon his laziness, wrote to the papers telling, with many exaggerations, the whole story of my proceedings. That evening, I was subjected to a more than usually threatening demonstration in the street. After this, I thought it advisable to barricade my house. A party of workers from a neighbouring town—for none in my own would assist me—

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strengthened my doors, and defended the windows with sheet iron. This accomplished, I felt at ease; and one night, after reading a particularly abusive letter from Jones in the daily paper, I went down to the cellar, and deliberately shut off Jones' supply of somnolence. "That will bring him to reason," I said. Alas! I did not foresee the future. It brought him to *me*.

After smoking a cigar with great content, I retired to rest, preparing to sleep my regulation quantity of 7.83 hours—beyond which, such was my sense of justice, I never extended my slumbers—and settled my accumulators. Just as I was about to lie down —it was close upon one o'clock in the morning— I was startled by hearing an ominous sound without. My wife, who had been asleep, also heard it, and started up in bed. She had apparently been anticipating something of the kind; for, though terrified, she did not seem astonished. At first it was dull, like a distant thunderstorm; but it gradually came nearer and grew more distinct. I had not faced mobs for nothing. I instantly recognised the roar of the many-headed beast hungry for its prey—the most relentless, murderous, and awful sound in the world. The crowd had come forth to deprive me of the legitimate reward of my labour and forethought— perhaps to tear me limb from limb. I was on my feet in an instant, took my revolver, and went downstairs to inspect my barricades. They were sound, and would hold out against any number of foes, if unarmed and unprovided with cannon or battering

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ram. Seeing this I regained courage. I retraced my steps, threw up the electric light in my room and approached the window. The crowd had now drawn very close, and was reconnoitring the approaches. At their head I observed the hated Jones, and realised too late that, had I pleased, I could have made him sleep for a week. The sight of him, more wakeful than he had ever been in his life, and swelling with all the evil passions of which wakefulness is the cause, roused me to fury, and put prudence to flight.

I threw up the sash, and stood exposed before the infuriated mob, pistol in hand. "You fools!" I cried. Hardly had I spoken, when my voice was drowned and my ears deafened by a roar like that of a thousand tigers; and instantly a shower of stones crashed through the window. One, indeed, struck me on the temple, and drew blood. Enraged and agonised, I was for firing into the midst of the throng; but my wife stayed my hand.

"For God's sake, Adolphus," she whispered, her face white with terror, "don't shoot. Put up the shutters, and let me go down and tell them that you will give them anything they want."

"You are mad, Mary," I cried; "do you think I will show the white feather to a howling mob like that? Are they to rob me of all I have worked so hard to get?"

"Oh," she said, "you have lived on their blood, and they will have it back; but me—they don't hate me!"

I threw her from me.

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"Lie down, and don't talk," I shouted.

Again I went to the window, and hurled defiance at the foe, and again a shower of stones narrowly missed my head. Stealthily I drew and fastened the iron shutters, and prepared for a siege.

For a long time there was silence; but I knew that my bloodthirsty foes had not departed. They were evidently concerting measures of attack. Jones was no fool, and was evidently resolved to secure success by the orderly and methodical nature of his dispositions. For half an hour or more this silence, far more terrible than the previous tumult, endured, while my wife, with her recriminations and moans, irritated me beyond bearing. She had warned me of what would happen; she had begged me to desist from my wicked practices; and now I had brought her to this pass.

"They will kill you," she said; "and you deserve it; but what have I done to be torn to pieces?"

At last I could stand her whinings no more. Making what I expected to be my last use of my scientific knowledge, I threw her into a deep sleep, from which she was unlikely to wake for at least twelve hours. I was thus at peace, to bend my mind to devise a scheme of escape.

Then suddenly the silence was broken, and there burst upon my ear a sound which thrilled me with horror. It was the sound of some heavy body being propelled violently against the front door. Again and again it was repeated. Stealthily opening a flap in the window above, I looked out. It was as I

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expected. They had set up a kind of gallows, from which a huge tree trunk was suspended, which, drawn to and fro by means of a rope with the united force of a dozen men, swung at intervals of half a minute, with an effect which rendered my destruction, within a few minutes, absolutely certain. What added to my horror was that above the trunk, on the cross-bar of the gallows, hung a noosed rope, evidently meant for me as soon as I should be captured. Above the rope, in ghastly symbolism, were fastened a skull and cross-bones, grinning horribly in the moonlight.

The sweat ran down my brow. I was doomed, and doomed to the death of the worst of criminals, and this though I had been the benefactor of my race. For a few moments I was paralysed, and incapable of thought. But despair does wonders. The brain resumed its functions, and the love of life compelled me to devise means of preserving it. I gathered all my forces, and thought with a concentration and rapidity which I had never deemed possible. Ideas came and went through my head like lightning. Should I throw myself down, trusting to escape a broken limb in the fall, and to slink away in the semi-darkness? No; the window was thirty feet from the ground. Should I try to escape by a postern? The house was surrounded on all sides by enemies, with eyesight sharpened by hatred. Should I hide, in the cellar, in the chimney? Little avail against the all-embracing search of my bloodthirsty foes. Should I ascend the roof? They were capable of burning the house beneath me. Suddenly, as I paced the

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room in the desperation of baffled thought, my eyes fell on my sleeping wife. An idea instantly flashed into my mind. I had sent her to sleep; could I not ——? I rushed downstairs, along the hall, and into the cellar, careless of bruises and of the darkness. With the strength of despair I tugged at my reservoir. It scarcely moved. Could I rouse my wife to give me help? Alas, no; my spells were too potent. Struggling furiously, with maniac force, I dragged the case upstairs, and into the hall. How I did it, I know not; but there are moments when we achieve impossibilities. I placed it—not against the door, any defence of that kind was useless—but lengthwise across the breadth of the hall, a few feet within the doorway. Exhausted as I was, I yet retained my clearness of mind, and was able to act with deliberation. The reaction was to come afterwards. With my hands upon the dischargers, I waited patiently and calmly for the inevitable catastrophe. I knew I had within the chambers a highly concentrated solution of sleep, capable of inducing instant slumber which must last for many consecutive weeks.

I was only just in time. The thud of the engine upon the door continued, and seemed even to increase in violence. The whole house reeled under the shocks. But I was unnaturally placid. Let the barrier give way; I was prepared for any emergency. I laughed to myself. Little did the assailants guess what was literally in store for them. Again the ram came crashing against the door; and yet again. At last, under the repeated shocks, the iron sheeting

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gave way; but slowly, and as it were reluctantly. Some clamps still opposed a resistance which it required two or three blows to overcome. Then the whole fell inwards, but fortunately in such a way as to miss my reservoir. It occupied practically the whole breadth of the hall, and, sliding across, fell sideways in such a fashion that it was scarcely possible to remove it except outwardly, and the less so as the sweep of the ram did not reach to its new position. Fortune had miraculously favoured my plans. Some moments I waited behind the barrier, distinctly hearing the voices discussing what it was best to do. After a short pause the crowd advanced; fifty hands removed the mighty mass, panting and swearing, and flung it with a crash into the darkness. Then they stood in the doorway, half dazzled by the glare of the electric light, for a few more moments, facing their destined victim. I was exalted, intoxicated at that moment. So must Athanasius have felt against the world. The crowd stared in amazement at my dauntless demeanour, and at my simple preparations. For one second I thought of drawing my pistol, and giving the signal for my own destruction by shooting the detested Jones, who presented a broad and easy target. But, no! my vengeance should be more subtle, and I would live to enjoy it. I stood behind my reservoir, with my hands upon the two dischargers, like the British gunners at Salamanca, resolved to wait till the last decisive moment. For a few seconds, half in awe, they hesitated. Those behind, angrily asking what they waited for, pressed

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on in the rear, and thrust them into the hall. Then, when I saw them about to charge, and felt that I had as many victims as the hall could hold, I suddenly turned the discharging taps, and the sleep came hissing out.

The result was magical. Never did Gatling or mitrailleuse produce such a sudden effect. "They dropped together all, as by consent," as the immortal bard has it, and lay like logs upon the floor. The solution was excessively strong, and acted like the fumes of sulphur upon a fly. Their howling ceased instantaneously, and was succeeded by sounds more appropriate to the dead of night. Those in the rear, astonished by the sudden change, pressed on, followed by some sentries from round the house, who also were bewildered by the silence. All alike, reaching the hall, fell forward, as asleep as Eutychus. Even I was amazed at the thoroughness of my victory. I advanced to inspect my fallen foes, forgetting the precautions which experience should have taught me to use, and, like them, fell unconscious, but triumphant, on a heap of confused slaughter. Whether because the fumes were already slightly dissipated before I reached them, or because I had enjoyed a regular sleep of 7.83 hours each night for several previous months, I woke while my would-be murderers were still sleeping, and even before my wife recovered from the combined effects of my skill, and of the rising fumes of the fluid. A glance at the prostrate bodies showed me that there was nothing to fear. I climbed unconcernedly over heaps of snoring

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humanity, and emerged from the doorway. Sleepers lay stretched around, thick as autumnal leaves at Vallombrosa: even a sentry on the outskirts of my park had succumbed to the blast carried thither by the wind. I surveyed the scene as Hannibal might have surveyed the field of Cannae. Returning to the house, I aroused my wife, and bade her collect her jewels, into which, with my usual forethought, I had transformed large sums of my money. I myself crammed several hundred and thousand pound notes into my pocket, and laid hands on all the loose money I could find. Then, rapidly, but calmly, leaving the place, I took train for a distant city.

The other day I heard that my enemies had awaked. But, such are the morally beneficial effects of sound sleep, that they manifest no further intention of taking vengeance upon me. And, while the fumes of my fluid still linger about the town, I am sure they will still remain mercifully disposed. Meanwhile, I shall calmly continue my career as a scientific benefactor of my race.

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II.

INTIMATIONS OF IMMORTALITY.

AFTER my escape from Jones and his myrmidons, I made no attempt to return to my old city. My adventures there, indeed, had not been of a kind to tempt me to renew my acquaintance with my former friends. I resolved accordingly to stay where I was, and there to carry on those scientific investigations which had been so beneficial to the world at large, and so nearly fatal to myself. But I thought I had discovered enough about sleep, and therefore turned my attention to the closely related subject of death. I do not, of course, wish to imply that I approached this subject from the theological side. I treated it purely from the statistical and scientific point of view: it was only incidentally that I came to regard it as a matter even remotely affecting myself.

I soon lighted on some very extraordinary facts which have hitherto escaped observation. Death, I found, was a phenomenon much rarer than is usually supposed. It is, of course, common enough viewed absolutely; but in comparison with the universality

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of *existence*, the process of the extinction of existence takes place but seldom. Still further, I elicited the fact that it is becoming proportionately rarer year by year. While the reproductive energies of Nature show no sign of diminution, her destructive powers are gradually but visibly tending to a vanishing point. In a word, Nature seems to be growing slowly incapable of killing.

For example, even those natural agencies which have been regarded as most terrific, plagues, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, would seem to be far less fatal at the present day than they once were. The Black Death of 1349, as we learn on reliable authority, swept away one half of the population in Italy, England, and Germany. No plague of the last few years has been capable of anything approaching this feat. Shipwrecks are less common than formerly, and usually, even when they do occur, less fatal to life. Human agency, which in other respects has proved itself able to assist Nature to some purpose, has in this matter been almost powerless. Engines of destruction are invented; Gatlings, Lee-Metfords, torpedoes, submarine boats, are pressed into the service of death; and the result is simply that fewer people are killed in battle than ever. At Cannae eighty thousand Roman soldiers were slain; at Sadowa, though the forces on both sides were enormous beyond precedent, but a paltry ten or fifteen thousand were left upon the field. Where shall we find in modern times a parallel to the fatal and murderous victories of a Genghis or a Timour?

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These heroes, with the clumsy assistance of swords and arrows, slew more in a few years than we, with all our machinery of death, can slay in half a century. So, too, on the smaller stage of private assassination. For ten murderers of a hundred years ago, there is not one now. When Nature was fresh and vigorous, Cain was able to murder Abel with the most primitive of instruments: now, though science has discovered all the arts of shooting, electrocuting, poisoning, and hypnotising, it is a rare thing indeed for a man to murder his brother.

This being the case, it is not surprising that the average age of men has undergone an appalling increase since the Middle Ages. The Black Prince died worn out at forty-six; Mr. Gladstone, after far more exhausting labours, was hale at eighty-five. Not a single king in English history, down to 1700, reached the age of seventy: at the present moment Europe swarms with sovereigns who have far exceeded that age. John of Gaunt was "time-honoured Lancaster" at an age at which a modern statesman is still a boy. Science and morality, little as such a fact might have been expected, have alike tended to lengthen life; the one by checking disease, the other by imposing limits on cruelty and murder. "The citizens of London in 1685," says Macaulay, "were proud of a death-rate of thirty-three per thousand." At the present time a death-rate of eleven is by no means uncommon. Everything, in fact, led me to the irresistible conclusion that Nature is ceasing to be able to kill as she once did.

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To many this might appear by no means an appalling discovery. To lengthen life is to them the great object of scientific investigation. But to me, as I pored over my statistics, the facts assumed more and more of a threatening aspect. I saw no reason why Nature should grow more destructive as time goes on. More and more she will tend to permit those she has brought into being to live; the average duration of life will increase and increase, until a horrible immortality becomes the lot of every creature born into the world. Men will be a set of Struldbrugs, condemned to live for ever an existence made more and more miserable by the competition of the crowds of the newly-born.

These somewhat pessimistic views I promulgated in a pamphlet. The immediate occasion of my venturing into print was a peculiarly terrible railway accident, in which ten people were killed. The papers talked of this as a horrible fatality, and went out of their way to suggest precautions which might prevent such catastrophes in the future. Accordingly, I wrote my paper to show that the fear was all the other way. So far from thinking that people died too often, I showed that people were now beginning to die too seldom. I proved that in spite of railway accidents the death-rate of the year was lower than it had ever been. If this appalling diminution in the death-rate goes on, I said, it will be necessary to make an Act of Parliament that there shall be at least ten railway accidents per annum. Before long, I observed, men will begin as a regular thing to live a hundred years;

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and how can the world go on in the face of a general longevity like that? Still worse, when the tendency was carried to infinity, and the human race began to live for ever.

I pointed out, further, the only conceivable means by which Nature might, at any rate temporarily, be freshened up into something like her old destructive powers. She should be caught and preserved. In certain untrodden parts of the world—the Poles, the tops of mountains, or the middle of deserts, it was likely that she was still tolerably unexhausted. She should be visited in those regions, trapped, and let out as occasion demanded, when killing became imperative. Murderers, for example, might at the present rate soon become inexecutable. We must provide against such contingencies by carefully storing up such fragments of unwearied Nature as we could catch. I was myself laying up such stores; in my travels, whenever I came upon volcanoes in full activity, tornadoes, or earthquakes, I was careful to sample the destructive force, and preserve it for future use.

My pamphlet, as usual, fell on heedless ears. Those who noticed it called me heartless or lunatic. But my prophecy was confirmed by the fact that next year again the death-rate was lower than ever. In a second pamphlet I showed that the curve of diminution in deaths was asymptotically approaching infinity. Mankind was on the borders of the horrible fate of never dying. This second pamphlet had the same result as the first; except that one man

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suggested that the public hangman should relieve me from my fear of immortality by a simple but degrading means. But I held to my views with unshaken tenacity. I communicated them to my wife, who had often before been made the unwilling confidante of my scientific discoveries. She agreed with me that the prospect of immortality was a horrible one.

"Think," she said, "you and I might be tied to each other for ever! Till death us do part! I never expected it to last more than fifty years at the most."

"The prospect is equally terrible to me," I replied. "But we must not waste our time in vain repining. What must be must."

"Is there no way," she cried, "of insuring ourselves against such a terrible fate?"

"None, except by the use of my bottled Nature," I said. "At the same time we need not be anxious. I see no reason for thinking that *we* shall live for ever, though many for thinking that our descendants may."

"Let them live as long as they like," she cried, "provided *we* die decently young. I have always pitied Methuselah's wife."

"On the contrary," I replied, "it was just the fact that his wife died early that enabled him to survive so long. Care would have speedily killed even an Antediluvian."

"Is there no way," she cried again, "of securing us against living too long? According to you, we

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shall probably hang on for a hundred years. As I say, I don't care how long the people live in the year 2,000; but do let us die before then!"

"If we don't," I replied philosophically, "the chances are we shall never die. Nature will then be so tired of killing that she won't be able to kill at all."

"Then we must kill ourselves," she said.

"No man can kill himself," I answered, "without the assistance of Nature. In every suicide she is the accessory."

"Then let us kill ourselves before she gets too tired to help us," answered my wife.

"Let us first wait and see whether we die in the ordinary way or not," I rejoined.

Persistency will have its effect. I was so diligent in taking every opportunity of airing my views that at last they began to produce some impression. And several opportunities *did* arise. Every time that a man of local celebrity had an illness and recovered from it, I wrote to the papers pointing out that the mortific energy of nature was obviously on the decrease. A hundred years ago the disease would certainly have proved fatal. On the other hand, whenever a local celebrity died, I wrote to the papers showing that in old days, before the slaughtering powers of nature had waned, he would certainly have died long before. No one was able to refute my arguments. Several doctors wrote to say that the cures were due to the advance of medical science. I had little difficulty in demonstrating that medical

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science does nothing but elicit the recuperative powers of Nature, and check her destructive efforts; and that thus these arguments but supported mine.

What made me more than ever anxious to secure adherents was a great private calamity which befell myself. I had, as the reader may remember, managed to carry away with me from my former abode a conderable sum of money. This, on arriving at a place of safety, I promptly invested; and for some years I lived in luxury on my annual income. But just about this time the concern in which I had locked up my money came to grief, and overwhelmed me in its ruin. I was reduced to a mere pittance; and it was necessary for me to look out for some method of increasing my income. I could think of nothing better than the time-honoured device of forming a Society in which I should be the paid official. Knowing that my opinions were gaining ground, I issued proposals for the formation of such a society. The public—or part of it—rose to the bait, and after a few preliminaries a club was formed for the propagation of my views, entitled "The Association for the Extension of the Dread of Longevity." At first this society had but three members, myself as President, the nephew of a wealthy and childless miser as Vice-President, and my wife as Honorary Secretary. Our activity was prodigious; my wife, indeed, wrote so many circulars that I began to fear she might do the Society irreparable harm by dying long before her dearest friend could accuse her of being old; and the Vice-President, whose

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uncle at eighty was as hale as at sixty, was unquestionably sincere in the cause. "Nature," he observed to me in confidence, "was certainly weary of killing, or she would have killed the old boy a dozen years ago."

In a few months the Society numbered a hundred gloomy mortals, all of whom moved about in fear and trembling lest they might live too long—except the Vice-President, who was equally gloomy for fear he might not live long enough. Every one of the members was a propagandist of extraordinary vigour. They made it their business to spread among their wealthy relatives the fear that they might survive into a senile dotage, and that their duty was to assist the mortiferous capacities of Nature to their utmost power. The Annual Report of the Society's proceedings had a great influence in increasing the gloom of the town. Men who had never dreamed of living beyond eighty became visibly anxious about themselves, and were seen paying stealthy visits to the physicians, in the hope that medical skill might succeed in discovering that they were the happy possessors of some mortal disease. I was soon hopeful that my theories might win the universal acceptance of the town.

I should add at this point, what indeed is too obvious to require statement, that this Society could not be carried on without funds. The services of the Secretary, of course, were honorary; but those of the President and Vice-President demanded a salary. I fixed my own stipend at five hundred a

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year. At first I was inclined to treat the demands of the Vice-President as mere whimsies; but, when I told him that he ought to be content with an honorarium of fifty pounds, he became so abusive that I was fain to purchase his co-operation at two hundred and fifty a year. The annual subscription being ten pounds, the Society had about two hundred a year to spend on propagating its opinions; and, as President, I took care to suppress any inquiries as to what was done with the funds.

For a few months nothing could have worked better than this arrangement. The Vice-President, whose duties were nominal, was apparently quite content with his position, and gave no trouble. The members, though occasionally they wondered what was done with their money, were easily quieted. After about nine months I decided to broach my grand scheme. I summoned a meeting, and spoke as follows:—

"As is doubtless well-known to you, the object of this Society is to promote the dread of longevity in others. This is the ostensible purpose of our existence. But the real one is to secure our own longevity, that we may live long enough to inherit what those who die may leave behind them. Now, unfortunately, Nature shows herself very lax in killing off those whose deaths are so eminently desirable. The Vice-President's uncle, for example, ought by all rules to have died long ago; but, in consequence of the lassitude of Nature, he is still alive and flourishing. In spite of my pamphlets, he manifests no dread of living

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too long. And the same is the case with many other persons, known to all of us more or less, who persist in living on after their continued existence has ceased to be a benefit to society. I therefore propose that we should correct the weakness of Nature. She is obviously too tired to kill these persons of her own accord; we must therefore assist her." (Loud cheers, and Hear, hear from the Vice-President.)

"Some persons," I proceeded, "might call me an instigator to murder. These are crude and inexact thinkers. For, if Nature is obviously unable to remove these persons without our assistance, we are equally unable to kill them without hers. If she, for example, refuses to poison them, we shall administer prussic acid in vain. Now I propose simply to leave them to her care. You say that then she will continue, exhausted as she is, to leave them alive. I answer, far from it. I intend simply to give Nature a tonic, which will restore her destructive powers for a short time to what they were a thousand years ago. Exposed to this revivified Nature, my worthy friend's uncle will inevitably die of natural causes; my friend will succeed to his estate, and we all shall benefit."

I resumed my seat amid tumultous applause. After a few minutes had elapsed, I rose again, and explained the method by which the work could be done. I had visited several regions of the globe, where Nature, unwearied by intercourse with man, had preserved much of her ancient vigour. For example, in Iceland she still shows much of her old volcanic energy. I had caught and stored some of her in that country.

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In the South Sea Islands, again, she was still very destructive. There also I had procured a quantity of very destructive nature. In the storm-zone, again, I had collected more of the same force. Altogether I had a large quantity, which, let loose in the proper regions, would destroy by perfectly natural means any person with whom it came into contact. I proposed to surround the uncle of the Vice-President with an atmosphere of this peculiar kind.

The Vice-President, rising, said he could hardly find words to express his gratitude and admiration. Of course he should regret the death of the old boy; but since it would be in the course of nature, it was no use quarrelling with the inevitable. He should propose that my offer be accepted with thanks.

Little did I think, as I smilingly accepted the vote of confidence, that it was to be the symbol of the ultimate ruin of my Society. I arranged that a vigorous destructive atmosphere of yet unexhausted natural forces should replace the emasculated sphere in which the old uncle of the Vice-President had hitherto been moving. The result was as I had expected. He died of old age in a few weeks, leaving my friend the bulk of his fortune of fifty thousand pounds.

On hearing the news of his demise, I was filled with satisfaction. "Now at last," I said to myself, "the Society will be fixed on a sound financial basis. With such a wealthy and influential supporter all fear for the future will be at an end." I went down to the club rooms in high hopes. The Vice-President

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was there to welcome me. I felicitated him on his good fortune, and incidentally observed how happy the Society was to have so powerful a member.

"Look here," he said when I had finished, "don't you think it high time that this foolery should cease?"

"What foolery?" I cried, astonished.

"Why, this foolery of reports, and pamphlets, and societies, and presidents."

"I am far from regarding *my* office as foolery," I replied with dignity, "whatever you may think of yours."

"*That* for mine," he said, snapping his fingers. "It was all very well to play at that kind of thing when I hadn't a sou to call my own; but now——"

"Then you're going to desert us!" I cried.

"I'm going to resign," he answered.

"You've been a traitor all along!" I said passionately.

"Not at all," he answered, with exasperating calmness. "I really *did* dread longevity while it was my uncle's. Had he lived, I should have stuck to my post and its screw through thick and thin. But *now* —why, I rather like the idea of living for ever on the income I shall have. I hope to goodness your bunkum theories *are* true, that's all."

"They *are* true," I answered.

"All the better. All the more time in which to enjoy the good things of life."

"Do you really mean to say," I said, "that you can face calmly the idea of never dying?"

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"With perfect equanimity," he said, with a smile, "now that I have the money to live on."

"And who got you the money?" I cried. "Do you forget what you owe to the Society?"

"To Nature," he answered, again smiling queerly.

"You know you told me my uncle would die a perfectly natural death. So, apparently, he did. I cannot see, then, what you want, unless it be to claim the punishment of a murderer."

"Well," I replied, "if you take this ungrateful line I don't see what I can do. But you might at any rate keep your resignation secret till the next half-yearly meeting. A hundred and twenty-five pounds isn't to be despised, I should think: as for me, I don't want to give up my two hundred and fifty."

"I will hang on till then," he remarked carelessly. "As you say, I can do with my half-year's screw."

With this I was compelled to be content.

The interval I employed in going round among the other members, urging them to stand by the Society. But I found small comfort. Every one of them, stimulated by the good fortune of the Vice-President, insisted on my performing the same service for them as I had done for him.

"Give me a bottle of your unexhausted nature," said Robinson, a man whom I had thought of as a likely successor to Brown in the office of Vice.

"What do you want it for?" I said.

"Oh, nothing," he answered; "but my grandmother is remarkably well."

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"I am glad to hear it," I replied. "She seems to be a bit of unexhausted nature herself. Why should you want any more?"

"Come now," cried Robinson; "didn't you kill off Brown's uncle?"

"What!" I thundered. "*I* kill off anybody! Old Brown died of old age."

"That'll do all very well for a jury," retorted Robinson; "but it won't do for me after your speech the other day. Look here, old fellow," he added, poking me familiarly in the ribs, and leering odiously as he spoke, "just give me a bottle, and then, when my grandmother dies, as of course she must very soon, I'll let you have five hundred pounds."

"She will die soon enough anyhow," I answered.

"She seems remarkably tough," he retorted.

"Well," I said, after a pause, "I am willing to let you have the bottle as a scientific curiosity, for five hundred pounds to be paid this day six months."

"As a scientific curiosity, of course," said Robinson, with a horrible grin.

He signed an I.O.U., and took the bottle with ill-concealed delight.

With the other members I had equal difficulty. Each of them, in return for their promises of support, demanded a bottle of my precious energy. It is true I was the possessor of promises to the extent of about ten thousand pounds; but I was disgusted at the venality of these men, and resolved on revenge.

The day for the meeting came round. I was early in my place, waiting for the rest to arrive. As soon

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as they came, I announced the resignation of Mr. Brown, and proposed the election of Mr. Robinson to the vacant office. Strange to say, this proposal was followed by a violent storm. Robinson wanted to know who authorised me to propose him. As a matter of fact, he intended to resign his membership of the Society. He was followed in rapid succession by others, all of whom resigned. At last, in sheer desperation and disgust, I told them what I thought of them.

"Here you are," I cried, "made wealthy by my means, and now you let me starve!"

"By whose means?" said Robinson.

"By mine," I retorted, losing common-sense in my passion.

"Do you hear?" he shouted. "The President says he has made us rich. He must be a murderer; for every one of us is rich by the death of some relative!"

"They died naturally," I answered, recovering my wits.

"Who made them die?" he said. "Whose bottles caused my grandmother's death? Who killed Mr. Brown's uncle? Shall I go through the whole list?"

"Stay a moment," I said; "don't be in such a hurry. How did your uncle die, Mr. Brown?"

"I don't know and don't care," said the late Vice-President; "anyhow, he's dead."

"How did your grandmother die, Mr. Robinson? By a natural or by a violent death?"

"By a violent death," he replied.

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"Then I suppose I killed her," I answered.

"You did."

"Then pay me the money for doing it," I retorted. "Hang me afterwards, but pay me first. Besides, if I killed her, who was accessory before the fact? Who gained by the murder? Whom will the law look out for, by the rule of *cui bono?*"

Robinson began to change his mind.

"Say it was natural, then," he said; "what difference does that make? If a person dies a natural death no one is responsible for it. If my grandmother's death was natural, *you* can have had nothing to do with it, and what business have you to ask money for it? There is no alternative—either you are a murderer, or you deserve no payment."

"Stop," I said; "there *is* another alternative. You declare, now at any rate, that the death was natural?"

"Yes, I do. And besides you promised it should be natural. And the doctor has given his certificate that it *was* natural. Senile decay, he said."

"Very well. Now I prophesied a natural death, and the prophecy came off. It seems to me there's something *super*natural about that. And—listen to me, Robinson—I am very much inclined to prophesy a natural death for *you*. Will that be murder, or a natural death?"

He trembled, for there was something in my eye which cowed him.

"I will answer," I said. "It will be supernatural. Listen," I cried in a voice that filled the hall, as I took from my pocket a bottle of considerable size,

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and waved it in the faces of the audience; "listen. This bottle contains the strongest solution of unexhausted Nature yet procured. At a motion, at a whisper, I break it, and let the dread power loose among you. You will all die; but by your own arguments I shall have nothing to do with your deaths. You will die, some of senile decay, some of fever, some of suicide—*none* by murder. Shall I break it?"

They cowered before me like sheep in a thunderstorm. Robinson was as white as a sheet; even the courageous Brown seemed agitated.

"You pitiful cowards!" I cried with withering scorn. "If I kill you, shall I be the cause of your death or not? I suppose, because you will die naturally, you will say I had nothing to do with it. Yet there you are, begging me, *me*, who had nothing to do with the deaths of your relatives, to spare your miserable lives! Speak, Robinson, Brown, any of you, shall I test the question? Shall I prove that I *had* an influence?" I made ready to dash the bottle on the ground.

Brown rose. "It seems to me, Robinson," he observed, "that the President is master of the situation. He holds us literally in the hollow of his hand. I think it would be advisable to come to terms."

"Yes," I said; "you had better come to terms. I shall keep this bottle for some months. If, at the end of a year, I have received all the promised considerations, I promise to break the bottle——"

"Don't *break* it," murmured Robinson, piteously.

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"Not so as to endanger life," I went on. "If a single subscription fails, I send an envelope to the defaulter; and he shall receive a blow, not knowing whence it comes. Stay in your places, gentlemen," I concluded, as I saw some about to rise. "You may stir when I have left the hall."

I marched out, not deigning to look round. Not a whisper, not a pin-drop could be heard as I went towards the door. Calmly I closed it behind me, and walked home.

Next morning, by the first post, I received five hundred pounds from Robinson. Before six weeks were past, I had all the promised money. Then, with a smile of satisfaction, I packed up and departed for another town, having first despatched the following circular to all the quondam members of the defunct Society:

"DEAR SIR,

"I beg to inform you that, having received all the money which your promises had entitled me to expect, I have fulfilled my engagement, and broken the bottle, which, I may assure you, contained nothing more dangerous than sal volatile.

"I have the honour to remain,

"Your obedient Servant,

"ADOLPHUS J. VALLANCY."

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III.

SELF-HAUNTED.

I CONFESS I did not like the look of that bed; though precisely *what* it was that I did not like was hard to tell. I looked at it in the candlelight again and again; and the oftener I looked at it the more ordinary it seemed—and the more dreadful.

"Come," I said to myself; "this is nonsense; we aren't in the Middle Ages. This isn't an Elizabethan four-poster; it's a nineteenth century iron Maple. A bicyclist, and object to a little roughing it! You've slept in many a worse affair before now."

But it was not *discomfort* that I feared.

Could it be that I was exhausted by my fifty miles of cycle-ride along the flat and easy Dutch roads? Were my nerves overstrung? If so, the cause and the effect were disproportionate; for I had done my two hundred miles in a day before now, and had felt no particular ill-effects. And to-night, till I entered this room, I had noticed nothing amiss in myself. Still, it must be so. My nerves must have been overwrought without my knowing it. A night's

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good sound sleep would restore them. But, a night in that bed——!

Let me not be so unjust to my Creator as to ascribe all that followed to accident. He who watches over the meanest of His creatures would never have permitted me to suffer such agonies but for some weakness, some collusion with evil, on my own part. I have seen since, though I did not see it at the time, that the events of that night were my own fault, and a punishment for my fault. During that afternoon, as I rested for an hour or so in the shade of a welcome tree, evil thoughts had come to me. *What* precisely they were I shall not tell, nor is it necessary to do so. Suffice it to say that I harboured them. At first appearing as it were from without, they were welcomed into my soul, and speedily became a fixed purpose. For the first time in my life I deliberately *resolved* upon a course of sin. I had opened the door to the powers of wickedness; and it is no wonder that they entered in. This story is a warning to those who are inclined to do the same.

The resolve was none the less fixed that, during the twenty mile ride I had made since, it had been completely forgotten. Action and open air had driven it from memory; yet it lay entrenched in the background of my mind, to emerge into fulfilment at the due time. And such an intention is itself a crime: whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer, whether the deed is actually performed or not.

But all this is the history of later reflection. I

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had no such thoughts when I entered my bedroom after a comfortable supper and a placid pipe, with just that pleasant amount of weariness in my body which promises a dreamless sleep. Never in my life had I felt less superstitious, less anxious as to my rest. Nevertheless, hardly had I entered the room when, at the sight of the bed of which I have spoken, a strange feeling of gloomy foreboding descended upon my soul like a pall.

A foolish impulse seized me to inspect the room. Foolish indeed, for one glance was enough to convince the most superstitious that there was nothing there. There was no tapestry, no dark corner, no dismal painting on the wall, no stain upon the floor. It was clean with all the cleanliness of Holland, and ordinary with all the tameness of modernity. A few prints of windmills and canals adorned or disfigured the walls. The romantic, the ghostly, could hardly seek a more unlikely abode than this most commonplace of chambers. As well look for a ghost in a jerry-built "model dwelling." I did not guess that I myself was the one supernatural element in the room: that such evil influences as were there I had myself brought. I felt a strange sinking of the heart as I tried to reassure myself by gazing round those placid walls. I dragged a chest of drawers to the door, and turned the key doubly. The room must have been modern indeed to possess a door with a lock. As I turned the key, I heard someone laugh. My God, what a laugh! It combined all the tones of mockery with all the tones of exquisite anguish;

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as though it were the laugh of a demon in mortal torture enjoying the spectacle of another demon in even worse plight than himself. And I could have sworn it came from the bed!

For what seemed an age I stood paralysed with horror, while the cold sweat came out on my forehead. Thought, decision, were swallowed up in the one emotion of fear. But at last reason reasserted itself. I determined, though it cost me my life, to investigate that bed. Lighting a second candle, since the first was going low, I drew some consolation from the increased illumination in the room; and, approaching with a curious mixture of stealthiness and courage, I removed the counterpane from the bed, and turned down the blankets and sheets. There was nothing to be seen. Everything was precisely as it should be. The sheets were dry and clean—all, in fact, that the most timid of travellers could have desired; and yet —I turned away, half-despising myself for my fears; and, as I did so, I seemed to hear something—the crinkling sound as though someone were turning in the bed, and the half-sigh of semi-conscious exertion. I turned again; and unquestionably there was *somebody* there. An invisibility lay before me, a presence not to be seen but to be apprehended—perhaps to be felt; for the pillow bore an impress of a head, and the sheets were hollowed as if with the weight of a body. Horror-struck, incapable of thought or speech, I fell back into the corner of the room, gazing spell-bound at this horrible phenomenon, and listening with concentrated agony of

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premonition for the voice which should reveal its meaning. As I huddled into my corner, with my hands before me as if to ward off an invisible assailant, I observed again a motion in the bed. A something which I could not see appeared to rise into a sitting posture, to grasp at the sheets and blankets which I had removed, to bestow them around itself, and then with a sigh to fall into slumber once more. But not before it had reduced me, if possible, to still greater helplessness than ever; for, ere it finally appeared to lie down, a strange breathing sound emerged from a point above the pillow, and the candle, which I had left by the side of the bed, went out, and left me in darkness. The phantom had extinguished it; and I perceived clearly that here was a being that loved darkness rather than light, because its deeds were evil.

It has occurred to me since, as it has doubtless occurred to the reader, to wonder why I should have stayed in that room. Why did I not shriek for help? Why had I not, instead of barring the door, flung it wide open, to welcome the consolations of human company? It was certainly no dread of ridicule that restrained me, no consciousness that others, seeing nothing to terrify, would have judged me weak or lunatic. And yet it was a true instinct; for I see now that the coming contest was one that had to be fought by myself alone, either then or later. He who has paltered with the evil one must himself face him; *that* struggle, like the struggle of death, must be met in person, and none can give aid or consolation but the Divine Being Himself.

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To describe my emotions as I sat huddled in my corner, apparently for hours, is neither an easy nor a profitable task. I prefer not to dwell upon that time of agony and fear, for even the memory of it is sufficient to bring the sweat to my brow and to stop the beating of my heart. How I lived through it I know not; and yet perhaps the chief horror of it all was the conviction that it would *not* kill me. Less dreadful would it have been had I but anticipated some manifestation the shock of which might be mortal; but I knew it was not to be.

My mental changes were gradual, as were the changes of the *something* in the bed. Slowly—it may have been the process of hours—it seemed to me, as I gazed spell-bound and unwinking at the spot where horror lay, the invisible began to put on visibility. A gloomy twilight slowly diffused itself through the apartment, upon which my straining eyes seemed to make out a gradually condensing form, at first vaporous, shapeless, and hardly to be apprehended by the senses, but growing, with almost imperceptible degrees, into definiteness of outline. At length, as the unholy light in the room increased into intolerable and devilish brightness, I saw, as distinctly as ever I saw anything in my life, a face upon that pillow; and, oh, my God! if the invisible had been awful, the visible was more dreadful a thousand times. Every vile passion—lust, murder, revenge, cruelty, hate—was stamped upon that face in unmistakable characters, as though all the evil of which the human race is collectively capable had concentrated itself

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there. To my terror was added unutterable loathing; nor do I believe that the most criminal of men could have gazed upon that face without the intensest detestation; for he would verily have seen there the actual ugliness of sin itself, unveiled and unashamed.

The horrible eyes met mine; but I despair of conveying any idea of what I saw there. The ordinary man, who knows but ordinary vicious faces—who, for example, has seen the faces of a few typical murderers—has only the feeblest images on which to model his conceptions of utter unredeemed wickedness; and it was utter unredeemed wickedness that was before me. Yet even the most inconceivably villainous of faces has distinctive recognisable features; it retains the marks of heredity, it has its family likeness to the sweet face of a mother or the innocent face of a child. In the horrible visage before me, to my unutterable shame, I recognised *my own.* Those were my own eyes that glittered before me; it was my own mouth round whose corners writhed the horrible grin which terrified me; it was my own lips that seemed parted to utter some demoniac blasphemy. For a moment I gazed with an emotion almost more of astonishment than of fear: the certainty that this was myself, for a moment struggled with the surprise I felt at finding myself so horrible.

But in that face, beyond its identity, were two other noticeable things; two visions forcibly stamped themselves upon my brain, those of domination and of mockery. There was irresistible force, compelling obedience; and there was diabolic scorn. Both these

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convinced me that in that face there lived not only myself, but *something else.*

At length the irresistible force, the something else in that face which was not myself, began slowly to exert itself in influence upon me. I felt dragged towards the bed, and was as incapable of withstanding the impulse as the tides are incapable of withstanding the moon. Furious but helpless, I obeyed the force, and slowly, like a bird yielding to the fascination of the python, I drew near the bed. You who know what it is to be constrained to face a sight of horror —to watch the surgeon operate upon a well-loved child—to see in a once beautiful countenance the ravages of leprosy or lupus—may form some dim conception of the agonies of my involuntary advance; and at each step the horrible lips were distorted into a diabolic grin of malice. Yet my limbs obeyed the commanding impulse; and, after a journey of ages, I stood at the side of the bed. The awful face approached mine; the demonic arms outspread and clasped me; I was drawn, my body unresisting, but my soul straining helplessly backward, first upon the bed, and then into it. And then, with one more killing, freezing laugh, the phantom vanished; the unholy light extinguished itself; a sacred happy darkness supervened; and I was alone.

Alone! My God, the happiness, the bliss of loneliness! For perhaps a minute I enjoyed that bliss. My mind, exhausted with fearing, was incapable of dread, incapable of anything but rest. I thought of nothing, I saw nothing. Little did I know that my

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ghostly enemy, like the torturers of the Inquisition, was but sparing me that I might recover strength to endure worse torments. Perhaps it feared that unconsciousness would rob it of its prey, and left me, to return with seven demons worse than itself.

After a minute of heavenly lassitude, I was again recalled to the realities of things. As I lay on my right side, I felt, rather than heard, behind me the crinkling of the sheets, as though I were no longer alone in the bed. Slowly the something insinuated itself beside me; silently, impalpably, invisibly it drew itself into horrible proximity. I saw, I felt, I heard, nothing; but I *knew*. Behind me was a shapeless form, an invisible phantom, an imponderable incubus. Thus, while I panted and my heart beat like a hammer, we lay for what seemed hours. And then, out of the darkness, at my very ear, came the sound of breathing; and over my face wandered the foul touch of invisible hands. With mighty strainings I strove to move; the muscles in my arms cracked with my efforts to stir and at least face my foe; but in vain. I was tied as with the chains of catalepsy; motion was as impossible as to him who is being buried alive. One sound will save him; the soul almost bursts the body to utter it; but the sound is not uttered. My soul nearly left my body in its struggles to control it and compel it to motion; but no motion came.

I seemed not only to have all my senses in their fullest keenness; not only to hear, to feel, as I had never heard or felt before; but my mind seemed also

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to apprehend without the agency of sense. The barriers between the natural and the supernatural seemed to be removed; and I knew, not mediately but directly, that I was engaged in a mortal struggle with the evil one. Not merely did I feel the embrace of those arms, not merely did I hear the motion of the hands above me, but I had the direct consciousness of a spirit operating upon my soul, not through the ordinary channels, but as spirit wrestling with spirit. Prayer there was none, nor room for it. As the poet on the mountain-top does not need sound, and thought expires in emotion, so I, in this deadly soul-grapple, could find no place for imagination, for entreaty; the dread reality swallowed up all besides. Since then—but only after the lapse of years—I have been able to conceive, perhaps more intensely than the combatant himself, those fearful struggles of the old saints with the Tempter, which Bunyan has depicted for us in his story of Christian and Apollyon. Yet mine was no temptation; it was a desperate effort of some supernatural being to overcome me by the force of sheer terror, and to drag me, body and soul, with him into regions of torment, from which no escape should be possible; and, during the struggle, I felt, with no conceivable palliation, all the tortures of the damned, aggravated by all the horrors of anticipation.

Upon my soul lay a dead-weight of conscious weakness. I realised, every moment more intensely, the overmastering force of my assailant, and the certainty that whatever might be his aim he was likely to accomplish it. Slowly the contest became

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more and more frantic, and concentrated itself into actual vision. Phantoms danced before my eyes; demons grinned in my face; horrible laughter rang in my ears; the grip of the gruesome bat-like arms tightened round my throat; and every emotion of wonder, horror, and killing despair revelled confusedly in my mind. Conscious as I was that my only salvation depended upon my control of myself, I began to feel that the demonic foe was effecting a lodging within me, and was rapidly forming an alliance with the worse and weaker elements in my own soul. I was, and I knew it, about to be stormed and possessed by a demon; henceforward I was to be no longer a man but a demoniac; no longer to rule my actions in perfect sanity, but to wander to and fro among the tombs, dominated perhaps by a legion of devils. The horrible fear that such was to be my fate was a powerful aid to my ghastly visitant in bringing it about. Fearful was my struggle to retain the dominion over myself. "No," I seemed to hear myself saying, "while I live I will keep my most precious possession, the mastery over my own actions; I will never yield my will to its destroyer." Even as I spoke the struggle became fiercer; I seemed to feel myself interpenetrated with Satanic influences. As with a wave they threatened to overflow me; in a sort of swoon I realized that my soul was passing beyond my control—nay, that it was passing away altogether, and that its place was being taken by a devilish power.

There are some who are pleased to laugh at the

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old stories of demoniacal possession; they speak of them as old wives' tales, as the legends of a decayed superstition. With such persons I do not argue; for I *know*. I can believe in the pangs suffered by the child when the demon, in obedience to a stronger, tore its way out of him; for I have felt the worse pangs of a demon striving to gain admission. I can well believe that even to-day men are possessed by devils—for, within a hair's breadth, I suffered that fate myself.

Do not tell me I am mad. I am as sane as any human being ever was; but the remembrance of my escape fills me with gratitude to God and with a consciousness how near, how very near, the legions of hell are to our hearts; eternally close by, to force an entrance, to contract alliances with our baser passions; to creep, or intrude, or climb into the fold.

For a long time I was sustained by that predominating instinct in man—the instinct to claim even his worst thoughts and actions as his own. I still retained a trembling grip upon free-will. I muttered to myself that I would still be a *person;* whether I sinned or did well the act should be mine, and not that of another. As I felt the accursed influence drawing nearer and nearer to the stronghold of my heart, I exclaimed inwardly that I would never yield it a willing obedience. But, slowly, it seemed to rise and sap the very fountains of the will. I felt my personality gliding out of my grasp. That dreadful doom was in truth to be mine—the doom of committing crimes for which men do not blame you,

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but of which they speak in tones of mingled horror and pity, and for which the punishment is not the hangman's rope but the strait waistcoat and the padded room. I was to be that lowest, that most unhappy of all God's creatures—the criminal not held responsible for his villanies, but spared, half in hatred, half in awe, as one with whom God alone is competent to deal.

Those stories, trust me, are true; the story of the Magdalen and of the Gadarene. But they are only half the truth. They tell us the blessed means by which the accursed lodger was driven out; they withhold from us in mercy that other narrative of the means by which he found an entrance; of the desperate strivings, the rackings, the loathing, the tears, the fatal surrender. Nor can I presume to rush in where the Evangelist feared to tread. Let me leave it, reader, to your imagination, to your pity; conscious that your imagination will be too weak to form an image of my sufferings, and your pity, though never so tender, too harsh, from happy ignorance, to sympathise. And God grant your ignorance may last!

The struggle was very long and weary—so long and weary that I fancy I shall carry its traces even beyond the grave. Nor do I claim any merit for the final victory; I am rather humbled by it, and willing to ascribe it to Him alone who is able to put down principalities and powers. When things were at their very worst—when the hot breath of my adversary wandered over my face like a destroying flame, and

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when I could hear his mocking laugh of expected triumph—then suddenly, whether by the direct unasked influence of the Almighty, or because in my last despair I found myself somehow enabled to pray —the battle swayed.

"Oh, God," I cried aloud, the spell of silence broken, "oh, God, suffer me at least to keep my own soul!"

As I spoke, the fiery hands were withdrawn; the lurid light vanished into welcome blackness; and then, as though my brain would endure no more, I ceased to know, and begin to fancy. The sheets hardened about me, as though changing into the oak-wood of a coffin; the bed seemed to whirl round and round; the dancing phantoms twisted and turned more rapidly before my eyes; the room swam about me; and I seemed to die. I was in my coffin below the earth, removed from human fellowship, horribly lonely. The smell of damp mould was in my nostrils, for I was dead, but conscious. And then exhausted nature could do no more; I sank into oblivion.

When I awoke, the sun was streaming through the windows, lighting up the commonplace room, with its pictures of Dutch landscapes and its dull and clean walls. There, against the door, stood the chest of drawers. Never was a room less ghostly. Without, the cheery voice of the landlord informed me that it was nine o'clock, and that my shaving-water had arrived. Yet, as wakefulness increased, my terrors grew. I summoned all my resolution, and with one spring left that bed of horrors. I scarcely stayed to

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pack my few belongings into my knapsack; hurriedly I cleared away the chest from the door and hastened downstairs. There must have been something in my appearance out of the ordinary, for the landlord stared at me aghast, and I heard him say to his wife,

"Our lodger looks like one who has been in hell."

I refused breakfast, flung a piece of gold upon the table, opened the door, by which my bicycle was standing, and, swiftly mounting, rode from that accursed house as though all the fiends of hell were at my heels.

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IV.

THE TABLES TURNED.

IT is well known that the law of supply and demand will not always work without a middleman. China may have its tea, and England may have its tea-lovers; but unless some person undertakes to bring the commodity to the consumer very little exchange can take place. In the same way, there are to-day thousands of people willing to see ghosts, and probably thousands of ghosts willing to be seen; but somehow or other it is but rarely—speaking comparatively—that a satisfactory interview takes place.

Reflections like these, added to the consciousness of an empty pocket, induced me to open up an agency for the regular Introduction of Ghosts to Psychic Amateurs, or, in other words, a Registry Office for Ghosts. Of course it was not without many perils that I reached the assured position I now enjoy; but gradually the genuine nature of the article I supplied made itself apparent. Both Spirits and Men expressed themselves fully satisfied with my Agency; and I have now in my possession a large

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number of human and ghostly testimonials to this effect. In fact, I may say that, during the last few years, very rarely has anyone applied for a ghost without receiving one of a thoroughly genuine kind. I may almost add that nowadays no ghosts are genuine unless they bear my Trade Mark.

This short introduction is necessary for the due understanding of the narrative that follows. It was the evening of November 19th, 1894, when I was sitting in my office, thinking that the day's work was probably over, and just preparing to put everything away, and close the office. Suddenly there was a peculiarly awe-inspiring knock at the door. It takes much to upset my nerves; and, indeed ghosts, as a rule, know too well that a word from me would throw them out of occupation, to indulge in the slightest want of respect; nevertheless, there was something more than usually uncanny about that knock. I felt, to my utter astonishment, a strange sinking of the heart. However, I called "Come in," in a tone of calmness which I hoped would impose on my visitor.

A Something came in—a Presence not to be described. In fact, there is no need to describe it, for everyone nowadays, thanks to my Agency, and the Psychical Research Society, has seen as many ghosts as he pleases. As I looked at it, I saw that there was no ground for my fears. The extreme ghostliness was a mere effect of extreme emaciation; the creature was but the ghost of its former self, and so a phantom twice removed. Obviously he had

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been out of work some time. I rose, shook his visionary hand, and bade him take a seat. I am always courteous to my clients. After a few ordinary remarks about the weather, which he admitted to be very trying, I asked him how I could be of assistance to him.

"I have," he said nervously, fumbling at what might have been a button-hole, "I have come in answer to your advertisement."

I got up, and took down a file of the *Times*.

"Is this what you mean?" I asked, as I pointed to the following advertisement of a few days before:—

"*To Ghosts.* Charkley Grange, once well known as a Haunted House, having during the last five years unaccountably ceased to be tenanted by Spiritual Visitants, all applicants for the post of Haunter of the aforesaid Charkley Grange are requested to call at the offices of the Society for Introducing Ghosts to Psychic Amateurs, between the hours of two and seven p.m., on any afternoon during the present week. No Ghost need apply after November 19th."

No application had been made for this particular post till the very last day possible; the reason perhaps being that the very energetic character of the new owner of Charkley Grange had become known to the Spiritual world. I was therefore very glad that at last an eligible candidate was presenting himself.

"So," I said to the attenuated visitor, "you wish to be appointed Haunter of Charkley Grange?"

The apparition answered with a timid bow.

"I have tried everywhere else," he said; "but I

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have found it absolutely impossible to make ends meet. Accordingly, though my friends have earnestly dissuaded me, I have decided to try Charkley Grange. The pay is munificent, though the life seems to be hard."

"You certainly *do* seem delicate for such work," I said, looking at his puny frame and high cheek-bones. "What are your credentials for the post?"

The phantom fumbled in a pocket, and extracted a pile of papers, which he handed to me for inspection.

I looked at them, and saw that they were testimonials from all the most celebrated ghosts of this or any other age: Job's Ghost, Cæsar's Ghost, Hamlet's Ghost, and all the other sublime apparitions

> "Whose distant footsteps echo
> Down the corridors of time."

In the bundle there were also two testimonials of a different kind, one from Mr. Sludge, and the other from Mr. S——d. This latter I quote in extenso:—

"Mr. Gespenst is desirous of obtaining a post as permanent apparition at Charkley Grange. I have pleasure in recommending him as admirably suited for such work. His voice is rasping and terrifying, his appearance indescribably ghastly, his table-turning capacity first-rate. All the feats which ghosts are expected to perform, such as opening locked doors, passing through key-holes, trailing chains, Mr. Gespenst goes through with an ease and *sang froid*

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which have obtained the highest suffrages. On the whole I consider him an exceptionally genuine ghost, and believe him likely to do credit to any agency that may introduce him to notice. Signed, W. T. S——d."

"Well, sir," I said to the apparition, after having perused the papers, "your testimonials are unexceptionable, and that from Mr. S——d in particular is most appreciative. I make no doubt that I can obtain the post for you——"

The phantom seemed about to express his thanks.

"On the usual terms, of course," I hurriedly added. "Our commission, which I think a very moderate one, is twenty per cent. on the profits of the first year."

He moved uneasily in his seat.

"That being understood," I said, "allow me to register your various 'points.' It is important to have everything done in a business-like manner."

I took down the ghost-ledger, and, calling in the clerk, directed him to take his tape, and give me the various measurements. The details are, of course, too technical to be recorded here; but I found that his curves were statistically most gratifying. His transparency was numbered 6; his capacity for foretelling the future 5; contractility 7; self-distribution 10; speed of vanishing 9; and so on. To speak in plain language, no key-hole was small enough to exclude him, and he could be in at least three places at once. I began to think that even the terrible Major, who had driven ten successive apparitions in immortal

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terror from Charkley Grange, might find his match in so well-balanced a ghost as this. Nevertheless, the extreme tenuity of my client was such as to make me fear for his life if I exposed him to the machinations of the Major. I therefore thought it right to give him a word of warning.

"I ought to tell you," I said, "that Major Charkley-Jones is no light person to haunt. You seem to me a very light person to haunt *him*. You can hardly weigh eight stone avoir-du-ghost. You appear to me too delicate for such a task. Can you not wait until your health is somewhat restored, before exposing it to such a fearful risk? You ought not to be ignorant that the Major has driven ten ghosts, far more substantial than yourself, into the hospitals of the Psychical Research Society, and that in spite of the devoted care of the nurses of the Society, several of them have succumbed to their injuries."

He smiled the ghost of a smile.

"I have counted the cost," he said.

"Very well then," I answered; "but let it stand thus, that you go on approval for a month, and if you like the work, you can then take it on in perpetuity. But I can be no party to your going to Charkley unconditionally."

After some further talk, this was agreed upon. Mr. Gespenst gave me his note of hand for a certain sum, and vanished with extraordinary suddenness. I sat down to write to Mr. Charkley-Jones that he might expect an A1 ghost on the night of the 21st instant; that the ghost was guaranteed by me to be

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the real article; and that if he objected to the visitor he might write by return and Mr. Gespenst should be sent elsewhere.

The Major's answer was prompt and decisive.

"Dear Sir," he wrote, "your letter of the 19th to hand. I shall be delighted to receive Mr. Gespenst or any other ghost you may like to send. I venture, however, to say that Mr. Gespenst is not so likely to enjoy his reception as I shall be to give it. I should have thought the fate of his ten predecessors would have deterred him from the attempt. It is no easy matter to haunt *Me*.

"Yours truly,

"WELLINGTON CHURCHILL CHARKLEY-JONES."

After such a reply I had no alternative. Mr. Gespenst was despatched to Charkley Grange, having been fired with a sort of languid resentment by the perusal of the Major's defiant letter. As for me, I could not lose; and I turned to other matters without an anxious thought. In fact, I had so much work in supplying "Borderland" with copy, and the Psychical Research Society with suitable subjects, that I had no time to think of the fate of Mr. Gespenst. But all my forgetfulness was compensated when, on the evening of the 29th of November, I again heard a knock at the door, and again felt the mysterious sinking of the heart which had attended the first visit of the Skeleton Ghost. At my call, "Come in," a Presence entered, which after taking

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some time to concentrate, adjusted itself into something resembling my thin client. After several seconds of staring, I traced the features of Mr. Gespenst; but the change was indeed pitiful to behold. Before he had been but a poor specimen of his tribe; but now he was worn into the thinnest of shadows. Ghostly crow's-feet adorned the corners of his sunken eyes; his hair had gone perfectly white; and his hands, on which the blue veins stood out with appalling distinctness, trembled violently as he advanced to meet me, while his teeth chattered as if with Arctic cold.

"Sit down," I said, pity wrestling with an almost uncontrollable inclination to laugh.

He sat down obediently, and pressed his hands convulsively to his brow. Then suddenly, as if ghostly nature could endure no longer, he burst into a fit of hysterical sobbing, shaking himself to and fro, and crying as if his heart would break.

"Come," I said, "don't give way like that. Has the Major——?"

"Oh, oh!" he cried, and again went off into tears.

I soothed him down gently, made him drink a glass of neat brandy, stirred the fire to a decent warmth, and then locked the door.

"Now," I said, "no one can possibly disturb us. Tell me all about it, and we will see what we can do."

By a violent effort he shook himself together, swallowed another tumbler of brandy, and told his

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dreadful tale. I tell it now divested of all its interjections and incoherencies, and thus doubtless deprive it of half its terror; but I confess that as the poor ghost shook and wept and stammered through his story, it inspired me with a horror which I shall never forget. My profession has long rendered me callous to tales of men terrified by ghosts; but the tale of a ghost terrified by a man is certainly the most awful that imagination can conceive.

"The first night," said Mr. Gespenst, "I determined to spend in reconnoitring, and finding out how the land lay. I waited therefore till I thought the Major and his family would be asleep. Two hours after they had gone to bed I patrolled the corridors, seeing which were the various bedrooms, and fixing them in my mind for fear of mistakes. I could of course even then have frightened the servant-maids out of their seven senses; but I thought that would be cowardly, and beneath a ghost with my testimonials. I was resolved to haunt the Major, and the Major only. After some hours I thought I had explored sufficiently, and was preparing to depart, when suddenly, as I passed the Major's room, I heard a laugh that froze my very blood! You may call me superstitious, but I am quite sure that laugh never came from supernatural lips! I fell back in immortal terror, and crouched in the corner of the passage. Again that human laugh, a laugh of contempt such as no ghost has ever heard before! My tongue clave to the roof of my mouth, and my hair stood on end. Goose-ghost rose all along my back. But from very

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extremity of terror I was constrained to move on. Rather than hear that laugh again——"

He sank back overcome with the terrible memory. His hand mechanically sought the brandy flask; he filled the tumbler again, and drained it to the dregs. The potent fluid, before it fell through him on the floor, revived him sufficiently for him to proceed with his tale.

"How I escaped from that corridor I have never known. It seemed hours after when I woke to consciousness in the chimney. As soon as I had recovered sufficiently, I fled from that accursed house. Gradually, however, strength returned, and reflecting on the advance of science, which had conclusively proved that such a thing as the natural has no existence, I chided away my superstitious dread, and a couple of nights later again made an entrance into what I can only call the Haunted House.

"This time I was determined there should be no delay. I merely waited at the key-hole of the Major's door until I was absolutely sure, by unmistakable signs, that he was asleep; and then, exerting the powers that have earned such recognition from Mr. S——d, I burst open the doubly-locked door, with a crash fit to wake the dead, and fixing my features into a most diabolical glare, sat down heavily upon the Major's bed. When I say *heavily* I of course mean it figuratively, for I am conscious that I am not the ghost I was. Nevertheless, the Major slowly awoke. If I thought to terrify him, however, I was grievously mistaken.

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"'Oh, it's you,' he said carelessly, turning over on his side again. 'Let me advise you, as a friend, to take yourself off as quickly as possible.'

"'No,' I answered fiercely, 'I came to haunt you, and haunt you I will. Major,' I said, 'I am your conscience!'

"'If that is the case,' he replied, 'you will give me very little trouble; but again I tell you, you had better go. Shall I laugh again?'

"At this horrible threat I confess my blood ran cold; but my honour was at stake. Again I cried, 'No;' when the Major, exasperated by my pertinacity, leapt out of bed with a force which sent me spinning to the other end of the room. He hastily struck a match, lit a candle, and cried with a horrible guffaw,

"'You fool, look behind you! A ghost with a shadow!'

"I looked instinctively, and to my unspeakable horror, saw that what he said was true. I was *shadowed!* Oh, sir, can you conceive the dread naturalness of my condition! I who had laughed at the tales of the natural, to be thus dogged by a shadow! Without a word, too terrified to shriek, I fled from that abominable chamber, conscious that wherever I went that horrid thing was following me! And it pursues me still!"

I looked, and saw that it was so in very truth. Mr. Gespenst had really a shadow, which moved everywhere with him. How the Major had achieved this miracle is more than I can tell; but I incline to believe that for a great sum he had procured the

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shadow of Peter Schlemihl, and attached it in hideous mockery to the person of Mr. Gespenst. At any rate, there it was, and it was impossible to doubt the dread reality of my poor ghost's story.

"Proceed with your story," I said at last. "It may relieve your sufferings to confide in me."

"It has already relieved them to some extent," the miserable creature answered. "But to think that I must drag this thing behind me for ever! I, who am so celebrated for dragging chains! It is dreadful! But to proceed to the last, the direst calamity. You may imagine that it was some time before I could summon up courage to attack the Haunted House again: indeed it was only last night that I finally resolved on an attempt. For a long time I thought of leaving the Major alone, and haunting the children or the maids; and I take credit to myself that I ultimately rejected this undignified plan. It must still be the Major. This time I would proceed with caution. Knowing by experience the Major's utter contempt for mere spirits, I thought of pressing a corpse from the churchyard into my service, and putting it in the Major's bed; but I reflected on the difficulty of dragging so heavy a body about, and on the cramped position I should have to take up inside it; and this plan was rejected also. Finally, after turning over many ideas in my mind, I saw nothing better than the feat for which I am particularly renowned; that, namely, of walking noisily, but invisibly, up and downstairs, and letting pistol-shots pass through me to smash windows and destroy

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pictures. This feat, which had often served me a good turn, I last night determined to employ; and at five minutes past twelve I put on my Tarn-cap and proceeded to perambulate the passages. The Major had not gone to bed; but I was rather glad than sorry for this. A man of his nerve was capable, if once in bed, of sleeping through the Walpurgis Night. For a long time I traversed the passages in vain. No one seemed to take any notice. I rather resented this; for neglect is the last thing a ghost can endure; but when I was almost dropping with fatigue a sudden noise assured me the Major was disturbed. He opened his door, and looked outside. For a moment he seemed puzzled; but suddenly a smile overspread his face. 'At it again!' I heard him mutter to himself. He disappeared into his study for a few moments, and then reappeared with a curious instrument in his arms.

"'You are doing it very well,' he said contemptuously; 'but there are two things you have forgotten. One is that though you are invisible your shadow is not. The other is, that science nowadays can photograph the invisible. I have already obtained several snapshots of your look of conceited satisfaction at the idea of frightening me; and I now proceed to obtain another of your look of ridiculous dejection when you hear that your trick has failed. The two shall be published in Borderland side by side; and S——d will never venture to employ you again.'

"Oh, horrible! To think that this abominable

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man not only had been photographing me, shadow and all, but was at that very moment catching an excellent negative of my crestfallen appearance! My days as an apparition are over."

Mr. Gespenst was so overcome that he hid his face in his hands and wept bitterly. As I watched him, his ludicrous appearance struck me so keenly that, like the Major, I burst into a roar of laughter. Mr. Gespenst looked up at me through his tears, terror in every line of his face.

"That human laugh again!" he cried, and started to his feet to vanish.

"Stay," I said. "I apologise for my rudeness. It *was* comical for a minute, though. Was that all? Did the Major do nothing else?"

"It wasn't all," he replied, resuming his seat. "I was too furious to give way for a mere photograph, even though it had a shadow after it.

"'Photograph if you like,' I said; 'but nothing shall prevent me from haunting you for ever!'

"'Haunt me, then,' he answered. 'I am going to the laboratory.'

"And off he went down the corridor, while I followed close at his heels.

"Arrived in the laboratory, with total disregard of my presence he proceeded to compound something with a pestle and mortar. His complete calmness, strange to say, produced a calming influence on me also. I watched him at his work. He was apparently making certain gases, for occasionally his bottles were filled with something

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of a green colour, and sometimes he would light a taper at their mouths. After an hour of this work he turned to me with a smile.

"'Look at this,' he said.

"Overcome with curiosity, I approached the table, when suddenly, with a rude jostle, he overturned me on the floor. Before I could recover, he had extinguished the gaslight and disappeared through the door, which he closed with a bang. Bruised and shaken, I rose angrily, determined on revenge. But in the darkness I could not find the door, still less the key-hole. Wherever I went I struck upon gases which this fiend had let loose from his bottles, knowing well what an effect they would have upon the far weaker gases of my composition. I moved in one direction, and encountered a stratum of phosphuretted hydrogen. Half killed with the stench, which penetrated to my inmost vitals—for, as you know, sir, I am but a kind of unsmelling stench myself—I turned in another direction, and came upon a flood of sulphur di-oxide, which all but choked me, and for a few minutes absolutely reduced my eyes to water. Struggling through this, I was greeted with a torrent of chlorine, which made me regret my former plight. In the midst of it all I heard the jeers of the Major outside the door: 'How do you like it? Pretty strong, isn't it?' and the like. Wild with pain and fury, I staggered out of the chlorine into the milder but asphyxiating influence of a sphere of carbonic acid. At last, all the gases mingled into one overwhelming, terrific, diabolically-inconceivable

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stench, of such size, force, and power, that I summoned all my remaining powers in one piteous yell for mercy to the Major.

"'Let me out,' I shrieked, 'and I will promise never to haunt you again.'

"'Swear,' he retorted, 'or I shall let loose a London drain upon you.'

"I swore, and he opened the door, letting in a flood of pure air from without. Overwhelmed with agony and shame, I fell at his feet.

"'Get up,' he said, spurning at me contemptuously. 'Go out and air yourself; you still smell abominably. Do you think anyone will employ you while you perfume the air for a mile round? Why, you can be known a week before you arrive!'

"Holding his handkerchief to his nose he led me along the corridor, and, bowing sarcastically, dismissed me."

"Your case is hard, Mr. Gespenst," I said, when he had finished his piteous tale. "Still, the phosphuretted hydrogen is worn out of you by now. You must take a rest, and then start on your profession again."

"No," he muttered feebly. "It is all over with me. I can still feel the sulphur di-oxide in my eyes! To be treated like a fever, and disinfected out of a house!"

"Courage," I said. "You can still live and work. Other people have been stunk out of houses before now."

"No," he said. "To you a smell is only a smell; to me it is a ghost as strong as myself."

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Here he relapsed into weeping, and, finding my consolations useless, I left him.

When I returned an hour or two later, I found a solid, comfortable-looking man in his place. Mr. Gespenst had been frightened to life.

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V.

THE NEW FRANKENSTEIN.

"YES," said Arthur, "I feel very much inclined to try it."

The speaker, Arthur Moore, was a man whom I was proud to call my friend. Early in life he had distinguished himself by many wonderful inventions. When a boy he had adorned his bedroom with all sorts of curious mechanical contrivances: pulleys for lifting unheard-of weights, rat-traps which, by cunning devices, provided the captured animal with a silent and painless euthanasia; locomotives, which when once wound up, would run for a day, and numberless other treasures, which, if hardly useful or even ornamental, had yet the effect of inspiring the housemaid who made the bed, with a mortal terror of everything in the room. As he grew older he lost none of his skill. At the age of fifteen he had successfully emulated most of the feats of Vaucanson; his mechanical ducks gobbled and digested their food so naturally that even the famous scientist, the Rev. Henry Forest, was for a moment taken in. He had been to Oxford, but after a year

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of University life, he had wearied of the dull routine, and had begged his father to let him start life on his own account. His father need have had no fear for the result. Within a year the young Moore's automatic chess-player, that had played a draw with Morphy himself, had attracted the awestruck attention of the civilised world by the simplicity and daring of its mechanism. The chess-player was followed in two years by a whist-player, still more simply and boldly conceived; and after that time scarcely a year had passed without being signalised by the appearance of new wonders from Moore's fertile brain and dexterous hand. His last achievement had been a phonograph so perfectly constructed that people began to think that even Edison must soon begin to look to his laurels, or he would be eclipsed by the rising fame of this young man of thirty.

I had known him since he was a boy; and had kept my acquaintance with him in spite of the ever-widening difference between our paths and our beliefs. I had chosen the medical profession, and after a year or two of early struggles, was at last beginning to see my way to an assured reputation, and a fair competency. In fact, I was already a fashionable doctor, pretty well known by the public, and I hope pretty well esteemed by the profession.

It was just after the new phonograph had appeared that I had with Arthur the memorable and unfortunate conversation which I shall regret to the very end of my life.

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"Well," I said, "a new and great success again. You will be one of the greatest benefactors of the century in a few years."

"Yes," he answered, for he had no false modesty. "I believe the phonograph is about as perfect as I can make it. Suppose we listen to it now."

He produced the instrument, and I had the pleasure of listening to a speech of Mr. Gladstone's, with the familiar tones and inflections of the great orator reproduced to the life. I could have believed I saw the Grand Old Man before me, as I had seen him so often.

"Wonderful," I said. "It is indeed perfect. What a strange, almost uncanny thing it is! We shall soon have to be very careful what we say; for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter. Fancy what a preventive of crime a phonograph fastened on every lamp-post would be! It would be a kind of Magic Flute, forcing people to tell the truth whether they would or no. Jones might say, 'I said this,' but the phonograph would say, 'You said that.' Mere human fallible creatures will soon be banished from the witness-box; judges and juries will content themselves with taking the evidence of unerring, unlying phonographs!"

"Heaven save us!" Moore replied; "all of us say many things that will hardly bear repeating; and if they are all to be recorded, how dreadful it would be."

"Yes; you see you are after all but a doubtful

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benefactor of the human race; it is not everybody who, like Job, can wish that his words were now written."

"Nor Job himself at all times," he answered: "perhaps he would hardly have wished to have recorded the words he used when he cursed his day."

"In fact," I said, "what is a phonograph after all but a tattling old woman, repeating whatever it hears without discrimination or tact?"

"Exactly," he said; "but with this difference, that the phonograph repeats what it hears without alteration or addition, whereas the old woman repeats it just as it suits her."

At this moment the fatal idea struck me, which now I would give worlds to have forgotten or suppressed before it came to the birth. Alas, we know not the results of our least words.

"Why," I said, "don't you try to make a kind of complement of a phonograph?"

"What do you mean?"

"Why, this. Your phonograph only repeats what it hears. Why not make an instrument which should, not *repeat* words, but speak out the suitable answer to them? If, for instance, I were to say to it 'Good morning, have you used Pears' Soap?' then why should it not answer, 'No, I use Cleaver's,' instead of merely reiterating my words? At present, your machine is nothing but an echo; glorious, I grant; a triumph of civilisation; but what an achievement it would be to contrive a sort of anti-phonograph,

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that should give the appropriate *answer* to each question I like to put!"

"Why, a thing that could do that would be nothing less than man."

"Well," I said, "what *is* man but a bundle of sensations—a machine that answers pretty accurately to the questions daily put to it?" For I was, or pretended to be, a full-blown materialist.

"It may be so," he answered; "yet it seems to me that he is a very complex machine for all that. He has taken thousands of years to evolve, if what Darwin says is true; you ask me to make him in at most a year or two."

"Listen to me," I said, half in irony, half in earnest. "When you made your whist-player, what did you do but calculate on a certain number of actions, all theoretically possible, and arrange that the machine should give the proper answer to them?"

"True."

"And with your chess-player, was it not the same?"

"Exactly."

"Well, then, the principle is granted. Allow that a certain number of phrases may be used; let your machine give the proper answer to them. Don't you see the analogy? Had it been impossible for the machine to speak, I should have been satisfied with your disclaimers; but your phonograph has settled that."

"The number of sentences is infinite."

"A detail, my friend. Are there not, practically,

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infinite varieties of hands at whist? Yet your automaton never made a mistake. Are there not infinite varieties of number? Yet did that puzzle Babbage's calculating machine?"

"You may be right, Phillips," he said, smiling at my earnestness. "I will think of it."

I took my leave, little dreaming that I had set in motion a mighty force which would bring misery to more than a few. Indeed, I completely forgot the whole conversation. It was not till several months later that, happening to meet Moore in the street, I was suddenly startled by hearing the words I have already mentioned.

"Yes, I feel very much inclined to try it."

"To try what?" I said, completely bewildered.

"Why, the thing we were talking of some months ago."

"Do you mean to say you have been thinking of it?" I said. "Why, I had utterly forgotten it."

"Thought of it, yes; and worked at it, which is more, I see my way to something very like it, at any rate."

"Go on," I said, becoming interested. "This is the most wonderful thing you have done yet, if——"

"Listen," he interrupted. "Words are nothing but air-vibrations, are they?"

"Nothing," I answered.

"Well, then, it follows that words, if put in the proper positions, can generate motion."

"I follow you; a molecular windmill."

"Well," he said, "this is the idea of my machine.

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Words are spoken into the ear of my automaton. Passing through the ear they enter a machine you would call an anti-phonograph, and set in motion various processes which in a very short time produce the words constituting the proper answer."

"Wonderful," I said, "if true."

"Come and see then," he rejoined, "if you will be so sceptical."

I followed him to his workshop, and saw a small instrument, in its main external details exactly like a phonograph.

"This," said Moore, "is the centre of my automaton. Try it yourself. Ask it a question—anything you like."

Wondering, I did as he suggested. There was a tube on each side of the instrument, communicating with its centre, which I supposed would form the "ear" of the automaton when finished. I was at a loss how to begin the conversation; but, being an Englishman, called the weather to my aid.

"A very cold day," I remarked.

A sweet and beautifully modulated feminine voice answered:

"Yes; but hardly so cold as yesterday."

I started, as though I had seen a ghost. Had I not been a doctor, old as I was, I should have precipitately fled. But it takes a good deal to shake the nerves of a physician. In an instant I recovered myself.

"Moore," I said, "you can't play with me. You are ventriloquising."

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He was very indignant.

"What do you think of me?" he said. "*I* to go playing the tricks of a strolling mountebank! What the devil!"

"I beg your pardon," I replied. "But you must acknowledge that on the Baconian principle one must acknowledge no new cause until the possibility of all known causes has been eliminated. Now ventriloquism, vulgar or not, is a known agent; your principle, whatever it be, is perfectly new. So that you can hardly blame me."

"I swear," he said, "that I have had nothing to do with the thing since you came into the room, and that while you were speaking to it I never opened my mouth."

"Never mind, I believe you fully."

"You shall take it with you," he replied, "and try it in your own rooms, if you doubt me."

"Not a bit," I replied. "Still, I will take it, in order that the outside world may be convinced."

"You shall; but try it again here, and see for yourself again. I will not open my mouth."

I tried again, a certain uncanny feeling still possessing me. Oh, for the inventive powers of a Frenchman, in order to begin the conversation naturally!

"That was a fine speech of Mr. Gladstone's yesterday evening."

"Yes," the delicate feminine voice again replied; "I didn't read it all, but the beginning and the end were very good, weren't they?"

Again the same eerie feeling came over me, followed

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as before by the conviction that some trickery must be at the bottom of this most unparalleled experience. I looked at Moore. He was sitting in his arm-chair by the fire, a smile playing on his face; but his lips were set fast.

I tried yet a third time, determined to watch Moore's face during the whole operation.

"Mr. Gladstone must be old now," I said rather inanely.

"Seventy-nine last birthday," replied the voice, *precisely at the same moment as Moore was saying,*

"By Jove, eighty-five if he is a day!"

I was convinced by that. No human being ever spoke two sentences precisely at the same instant. Either there was somebody else in the room, or Moore had succeeded, marvellously succeeded. He had made an instrument that could not only imitate the tones of the human voice, but could keep up a conversation as constantly, if not as wittily, as Miss Notable and Mr. Neverout in Swift's Polite Conversation.

"Satisfied, old fellow?" said Moore, rising from his chair and coming toward me.

"Are you sure there is no one else in the room?" I said.

"Search," he replied, a little contemptuously, as though half amused, half wearied by my recurring scepticism.

But I was too well acquainted with Moore's earnest and honourable nature to doubt him any more.

"My dear fellow," I said, "I know you are

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incapable of deception. I take your word. On anything else I would take your nod or shake of the head. But this is extraordinary, very extraordinary. I never heard anything like it."

"No more did I," he replied with pardonable vanity, "until a week or so ago. I had tried all kinds of devices to make the thing answer sensibly; she would answer, of course, long ago, but I wanted her to behave like a lady, not like a lunatic."

"So you mean your automaton to be a lady, do you?"

"Yes," he replied, drawing closer. "And I want her to be a lady that would deceive the Queen herself. Not a thing that can only act when lifted into a chair, or stuck up on a platform; but a creature that will guide herself, answer questions, talk and eat like a rational being, in fact, perform the part of a society lady as well as any duchess of them all."

"Moore," I said, "you must be mad."

"Mad or not, I mean to try it. See here. Here is another automaton, that can walk, eat, turn its head, shut its eyes. That is common enough. Here is the brain power, the 'anti-phonograph' that can speak and hear, indeed do anything but think. What is wanted but that the two should be combined?"

"My dear fellow," I answered, "it is easy to talk like that. I am a materialist, and would grant you more than most; but even in my view the brain is more than a mere machine. A man guides himself; *you* have to guide this automaton. How are you

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to get inside her and make her do all these things together at the proper time? Take a very simple example; your thing has to be sure to open its mouth when it speaks. How are you to ensure that the process which causes it to open its mouth, and the process which causes certain words to be uttered, shall take place simultaneously? Suppose the thing to say, 'I will sit down;' how are you to ensure that, at the proper moment, she shall go through the proper motions involved in sitting down? Remember, an error of half a second in your mysterious clockwork may make all the difference between your duchess occupying a dignified position in a chair and sprawling ingloriously on the floor. Why, think of the actions of but five minutes. She rises from a chair, she avoids the toes of the ladies and gentlemen in the room, she bows to a gentleman, she smiles—more or less hypocritically—at a lady, she makes a *bon-mot*, she laughs at somebody else's *bon-mots;* she even blows her nose. What countless simultaneous processes, not one of which must go wrong!"

Moore heard me through.

"Plausible enough," he said, when I had finished; "we shall soon see who is right. But tell me, should you not have said, a year ago, that the anti-phonograph was an impossibility?"

"Certainly I should."

"Then a year hence you may alter your opinion on this point, as you have on that."

"Hardly."

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"Who was it," he asked, "who lectured so vigorously on the folly of certain women of our time, and talked so largely about their utter inanity? Why, I remember your exact words. 'The Society woman of our time,' you proclaimed, 'what is she but a doll? Her second-hand opinions, so daintily expressed, would not a parrot speak them as well? Her motions, her poses, which she thinks so statuesque, how affected, how mechanical they are! Is she a woman, this creature of the nineteenth century, or a puppet dressed up to go through a number of motions on the stage of London life, an automaton obeying the wire-pullings of the showman Fashion?' You meant all that for metaphor and eloquence, old fellow; and yet you object to my proving that it is all literal truth!"

"Prove it first," I said.

"Only give me time," he answered. "But before you go," he said, with a sudden impulse, as he saw me nearing the door, "for God's sake not a word of this until I give you leave."

"Make your mind easy," I replied; "a doctor knows how to keep a secret. When your lady goes out of order, send for a bottle of my emulsion, and I'll engage she'll trouble you no more!"

During the next few months I often thought of Moore and his hallucination; the picture of the poor fellow engaged on a hopelessly mad task often rose before my mind. I pitied him greatly. "Another fine brain wasted," I used to say. "A man that more than rivalled Edison, spending the best years of his

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life over a mad chimera!" For I often visited him, and found him now despondent, now enthusiastic, but always dogged and impenetrably determined. I urged rest, a sea-voyage, anything to cure him of his brainsick folly. But he met me always with one reply: "Rest *then;* not before." Rest in the grave, poor fellow, I thought, as I noted his hectic cheek and staring bones. His fiery soul was fretting his body to decay.

At last, more than a year after our last conversation, amid the heap of letters lying on my table at breakfast, I came upon one that startled me. It was from Arthur Moore: short, but to the point.

"Success at last; come when you can."

As soon as my round of visits was finished, I drove to his rooms. Mounting the stairs, I was ushered into the room by the most beautiful girl I had ever seen: a creature with fair hair, bright eyes, and a doll-like childishness of expression.

"Can he have married?" I thought, as I looked at her. "How is Mr. Moore?" I said aloud.

"Poorly to-day," she replied. "He will be here in a moment."

Where and when had I heard that voice before? I seemed to know it, and yet I could not associate it with anybody. But I had no time to be perplexed; for in two or three seconds Moore appeared, looking ghastly and deathlike in his pallor.

"You are ill," I said, when the first greeting was over. "You have been overstraining yourself. You must really rest, or you will kill yourself."

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"Yes, I must," he replied; "and I think I shall. It has been toilsome work. But I think it was worth it, don't you?"

"How should I know?" I answered; "I haven't seen it yet."

"Yes, you have," he said, smiling in spite of the pain that he must have been feeling.

I looked around, bewildered. I could see nothing but the same old room, and the strange girl sitting in an easy chair in the corner.

"You are mysterious," I said, wondering not only at his words, but at the fact of his not having introduced me to the girl. "Perhaps she is a nurse," I thought; though no nurse in all my experience had ever looked like that.

"Wait a moment," said Moore. Then, turning to the girl, he spoke a little louder.

"Mr. Gladstone must be getting old now," he said.

Again those clear, distinct, delicate tones, as the answer came,

"Eighty last birthday."

I saw it all now. That beautiful, lady-like girl, that had ushered me into the room, whom I had taken for his wife, was an automaton! That doll-like expression was due to the fact that she *was* a doll. I was utterly astounded, and felt as if I were dreaming. The impossible had taken place. Moore sat by, enjoying my bewilderment; for a moment his weakness left him.

"Watch," he said.

"Come here," he said to the automaton.

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The lady arose, after one second of apparent indecision, and approached him.

"Let me introduce to you Dr. Phillips," he said.

The lady smiled approval. (To this day I have never understood how Moore had managed to produce that smile—that fatal, monotonous, fascinating smile.)

"Dr. Phillips, Miss Amelia Brooke."

The lady bowed, and extended her hand.

"I am most happy to meet one of whom I have so often heard," she said.

Could it be a reality? I felt more and more staggered. The lady stood perfectly still, her hands clasped before her. This fair creature not of flesh and blood? Impossible!

"You may go," said Moore.

The thing moved back to her place, and sat down.

"What do you think of her?" he said aloud.

Before answering, I looked round to see where she was.

"Don't mind," he said, laughing; "she can't hear. I often have that feeling myself. You may discuss her as you please, and she won't be offended. She has one merit other women haven't, she is not touchy; but she has a failing the best of them have not, she can't blush. On the whole, however, I prefer her."

"I am still almost incredulous," I replied; "indeed, until I have dissected her, and found pulleys instead of a liver, and eccentrics instead of a spleen, I shall hardly believe she isn't a woman in reality."

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"You can easily do so," he said. "Come here, Amelia."

The creature rose, and came forward.

"Let Dr. Phillips see your arm," he said.

The lady showed me her arm, and turned up her sleeve. It did not need a moment's inspection to show me that this was not an arm of flesh and blood. What it actually was made of Moore would not tell me.

"Better than Madame Tussaud's, isn't it?" he said.

"Much better," I replied. "Might deceive anyone but a doctor."

Passing my hand down to her wrist, I noted an exactly-moving pulse. So wonderfully was the human pulse imitated, that I believe anybody but one, like myself, trained to accurate discrimination, would have been deluded. I could not refrain from expressing my admiration.

"Yes," said Moore, "she will often have her arms bare, and there may be a good deal of hand-pressing and that sort of thing; so that I thought I ought to have everything right."

"Does her heart beat too?" I asked.

"No," he said; "I wanted the space for other mechanism, so she has to do without a heart altogether. Besides," he added, smiling, "I wanted her to be a Society lady."

"The thing will be worth thousands to you," I said, when I had finished the examination of the creature's cutaneous covering. "It is uncanny enough, and I

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can't say I like it, but it will draw. What a pity Barnum has gone! He would have given you a million dollars for it."

Moore rose angrily.

"Do you think I will sell my own life-power for money?" he cried. "That thing has cost me at least ten years of my life, and she shall never be exhibited like a two-headed nightingale, or a creature with its legs growing out of its pockets! She shall walk drawing-rooms like a lady, or I will break her to pieces myself!"

"My dear fellow," I said, "you are over-excited and ill. Surely you cannot know what you are saying?"

"I know well enough," he answered doggedly. "I have made a lady, you can't deny it; and a lady she shall be."

"You have made a marionette," I said, "a very wonderful marionette, but nothing more. Never mind," I went on, seeing him getting more passionate, "all in good time. For the present you must rest and lie still."

"Phillips," he said, all the force of his character coming out in his face, "I am determined that she shall be the beauty of the season. She shall eclipse them all, I tell you. What are they but dolls? and she is more than a doll, she is *Me*. I have breathed into her myself, and she all but lives; she understands and knows! Come, promise me you will not betray me!"

"Of course I will not," I said; "but you must give

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up this mad scheme. Consider, as an automaton she will make you for life; as a lady she will be found out in five minutes, and you will be laughed at. For your own sake pause!"

"Listen," he said fiercely, all the veins in his forehead standing out like cords. I saw then how his own creation had possessed him till he was no longer master of himself.

"Listen," he repeated. "You call her an automaton. I tell you she is alive. See!"

He called the thing to him.

"Amelia," he said, "I have made you, and you are mine. Are you grateful?"

The creature smiled—the one smile she possessed, which she had, as I knew afterwards, for prince or peasant, man or maid.

"I can never forget what I owe you," she replied.

"Kiss me then," he said.

The thing bent down and kissed him obediently.

"You see," he cried; "is *that* an automaton?"

I felt sick and disgusted. I was already beginning to feel that hatred of this creature which afterwards filled me to overflowing.

"No," I said, "she is no automaton for *you*."

"Then," he replied, ignoring the implication of my words, "will you introduce her to Society as a lady?"

"Never!" I answered. "Moore, you are beside yourself."

"Very well," he rejoined; "I will find somebody to do it instead. Remember, you have promised not

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to betray me, or to breathe a syllable of all this to anyone."

Things had evidently gone far. As a doctor, I knew well how the constant brooding on a fixed idea often unhinges the strongest brain; but I confess that never in all my experience had I seen anything like this. It seemed to me like a possession of the devil. Would to God the accursed automaton were burnt to ashes, or had never been made! Again and again I wished I had never uttered the thoughtless words which had set all this in motion. But it was useless crying over the irremediable past. Something must be done, and done quickly, or poor Moore would make himself the laughing-stock of all London.

"Arthur," I said, "you must take a little time to rest before you do anything. Your physical nature is completely overwrought. Take my advice, and go to bed."

"Will you help me?" he said obstinately.

"No," I answered, losing patience at his confirmed stupidity.

"Then," he said, "I give——" What he would have added remains a secret, for at that moment his strength, tried too long, gave way, and he fell at my feet in a swoon.

Forgetting everything, save only that he was my friend, and that he was helpless, I applied the usual restoratives, and soon brought him round. I then rang the bell; a woman appeared.

"Your master is ill," I said. "Help me to put him to bed."

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The woman was a rough and rather dirty creature, without a trace of beauty in her, but she applied herself with alacrity to the task. We soon had poor Moore comfortably lying in bed; I gave the woman the proper directions, and left, promising to call again in the morning.

During all this time the automaton had remained motionless in the corner. I afterwards ascertained that Moore had concealed her more extraordinary powers from the other inmates of the house, thinking they would be frightened; only letting them fancy she was a doll of the kind of Mr. Maskelyne's Psycho. She had made no motion to assist her maker, "grateful" as she was to him. I noted this with a sort of angry satisfaction.

"Moore," I thought, "said he preferred her to other women; on the whole *I* prefer the ugliest and dirtiest of them all to that beautiful but unfeeling creature."

In a week care, and his own indomitable energy, restored Moore to something that did for health. He rose from his bed silent, impenetrable. He thanked me for my attention in polite terms; too polite, I thought, for the friend of so many years. Of his purpose, not a word. Had he forgotten it? Alas, no!

If there is any quality on which, more than on others, I fancy I have a right to plume myself, it is that of a firm will. What else, indeed, than an unflinching resolution could have brought me through the innumerable difficulties and struggles of my early life to the position I occupy at present? My

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enemies, indeed, have called me obstinate; but no one, not even a caricaturist, has ever represented me as flabby and pliable. Strong-willed I know I am; I have proved it over and over again—and yet there was one man before whom I was as wax, or as one of his own automata. That man was Arthur Moore. Years have gone by since he died; yet such is the spell his very memory casts over me that I feel even now that were he to come again and tempt me I should yield again, and yield almost willingly. Let those sneer who have never been tried as I was, who have never met the man of adamant, the King of Men, and who fancy themselves strong because they have always lived among the weak.

Shortly after his recovery, Moore called on me. There was a look of fixed resolve upon his face before which I quailed. It was the look of the monomaniac, that look which only comes after long brooding upon one idea.

"For the present she is perfect," he said. "I have taught her French—drawing-room French, I mean—and three songs. She can enter a room, bow, smile, and dance. If with these accomplishments she can't oust the other dolls and turn them green with jealousy for one season, I am much surprised. Now will you help me?"

"No," I said. I was still struggling with the omnipotence of his will.

"You shall," he replied. "Others would do it if you refused; but it is my whim that you shall be the one to share my glory. Oh, what a time

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we shall have—how we shall laugh when we see it all, and think what fools men are!"

Again I tried to enter a feeble protest, but he overbore me. You ask how: I cannot tell. One thing I know, that if the thing were to happen again I should yield again. Call it magic, call it the force of personality; call it anything you like; but it overbore me. I yielded; I promised my assistance. We sat like two mischief-making children far into the small hours of the night, plotting how we could carry out the plan best, and arranging every detail so as to assure success and evade detection. Excuses and palliations coursed in under currents through my mind. I was a scientist, conducting a psychological experiment. I was a mere toy-maker, introducing into the world a rather elaborate toy. I was a Maskelyne, exposing the spiritualists. But on the whole I gave little heed to these thoughts. Moore had enslaved me, body and mind; I was carried away in a kind of drunken enthusiasm, and almost as feverishly excited as Moore himself. Nothing would now have stopped me. Would Frankenstein have paused the very hour before his creature took life? As for Moore, I believe he would have gone on with his designs in the very midst of the thunders of the Judgment Day itself.

Why should I linger over the early triumphs of our Phantasm? I was a fashionable doctor: I brought Miss Amelia Brooke out as a niece of mine. The Countess of Lorimer, one of my patients, undertook to pilot her through the first shoals of real life.

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Never shall I forget that first evening. Scarcely had she entered the room—it was at Lady Vandeleur's —when the eyes of all seemed, as if by magic, to be turned towards her. Exquisitely dressed, with a proud demeanour, with the step of a queen, she swept into the ball-room. She was my niece; I ought to have been proud of her; but I hated her with an intense loathing. Moore could do much with me, but he could not make me like this creature. Yet I was bound in nature to do all I could for her.

"Who is she?" said young Harry Burton to me. "By Jove, she looks like a born queen."

"You flatter me," I replied. "She is my niece. Good God," I went on to myself, "would that she were a born anything, instead of a made doll!"

"Oh," rejoined Burton, "lucky man that you are! Introduce me, will you?"

"With pleasure," I answered.

I took him up and introduced him. During the ceremony I watched the creature carefully. No, there was no doubt about it. Such acting would deceive the Master of the Ceremonies in the court of Louis XIV. himself. Every motion, every word, was exactly as it should be. How on earth had Moore managed it? I was almost deceived myself. Could this be after all a real creature of flesh and blood, substituted for the Phantasm? No; that detestable, beautiful smile was there—a smile which no woman ever wore, yet which none the less would be the bane of more than one man's existence.

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Harry Burton danced many dances with her that night. When it closed, he was head over ears in love.

"Phillips," he said in a brief interval, "she is divine."

"Devilish, rather," I thought. "Yes," I said aloud, "I think she is good-looking."

"Good-looking!" he cried. "What are all these painted dolls to her? *They* have nothing to say for themselves, *they* are mere bundles of conventionality; but *she*—she is all soul."

"My boy," I said warningly, "you are evidently all heart. Be careful. Don't do anything rash. Dance with her, talk to her—do anything but fall in love with her."

"Who talked of falling in love?" he said, astonished at my earnestness. "I said nothing but that she was the finest girl in the room, and so she is, by Jove!"

"Nevertheless," I said, "it doesn't follow that she's worth falling in love with. Many a person *looks* all right, that's unsound within."

"Why, here you are running down your own niece!"

"Not running her down; merely warning you. Besides," I added smiling, "she's only my niece by marriage."

At this moment a new dance began, and Burton ran off to claim his partner. I remained, absorbed in not very pleasant reflections. Things were getting involved already. Moore had only told me he was

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making a woman; I had never calculated that he would make a coquette. What would come of it? I sat and watched her as she danced, dancing beautifully but a little mechanically, I thought, saying always the right things, answering questions always in the same way, and wearing at pretty regular intervals the same detestable smile. If I hated her before, I hated her tenfold now. I would speak to Moore, and put an end to it. A sudden cold—ordered to the South of France—and never let her come back. Good heavens, this creature never had a cold, never had a headache, never felt out of sorts: yet Moore said he had made a woman!

Slowly the evening dragged to its close—the most wearisome evening I had ever spent. The creature did not seem to tire; one dance or twenty was the same to her. The monotony of it all became at length intolerable to me. At the earliest decent opportunity I took my leave.

Moore had never been a Society man. Even to witness his own triumph he had refused to be drawn out of his retirement. Perhaps indeed he was afraid that his nerves might prove unequal to the strain of watching the creature that he had made rivalling the creatures that God—and the milliner—had made; perhaps he feared he might be tempted to betray all. At any rate, he stayed away; and it was with a feverish eagerness that he waited for the story of her successes from my lips.

"How did it all go off?" he said anxiously, as I made my promised call to tell him.

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"As an experiment, very well," I answered. "There was no hitch, no failure. The success was only too monotonous. Human beings sometimes put their foot in it; she never. Would to God she might show now and then a little proneness to error!"

"You are queer," Moore answered. "Why should you grudge her her victories?"

"Arthur," I said, "the joke has gone quite far enough. Put a stop to it. Why go further? Think of the chances of detection—no, think of the far worse chances of success! Can't you see that the more skilful the deception the more dangerous will its consequences be? Already more than one young fellow has fallen head over ears in love with her. It is horrible to think of!"

"The fools!" he said, with a rather cynical smile. "That is just the way with young fellows—never looking below the surface, looking only at the face. Why, Phillips, if they are taken in in that way they deserve to be taken in! *I* shall do nothing."

He fixed his eyes upon me in conscious power. He knew that I could not resist him. Weakly, but inevitably, I gave way. I should do so again, with all the consequences as clearly before me as they are now.

So the thing went on, new developments constantly arising. I shall not stay to repeat them. The story is too painful to me; it is the story of my own insensate folly, and I do not care to dwell upon it. I hasten to the fatal ending.

Among the many deserters from the shrines of

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other goddesses, who thronged to pay their court to this new and strange divinity, two seemed to hold the divided first place in her favour. One was my young friend, Harry Burton; the other was handsome, impulsive, universally-liked Dicky Calder. These two had been firm friends before, in spite of the fact that they had often flirted with the same girl. But it was impossible for two young fellows to love Amelia and continue to love each other. I watched the gradual change of their affection into distrust, jealousy, and hate; first with unutterable sorrow, and then with a sort of fatalistic shame. It was *my* fault, certainly; I could not hide that even from myself; but I seemed to be bound to go on in the path I had begun, committed to a course which knew no turning. Did I hesitate? A glance from Moore's commanding eyes impelled me onward. I repeat it, I am a strong-willed man; but Moore was the stronger.

To do Amelia justice, she was rigidly impartial between Burton and Calder. For both she had the same silvery tones, for both the same fascinating smile. To both, if they asked the same questions, she returned identically the same answers. To both she sang the same songs, with the crescendo in the same passages, and both, at the conclusion of the songs, received the same languishing, irresistible smile over the right shoulder, which made them her slaves on the spot.

At times the irony of the situation overcame me, and I could not restrain a laugh. "Philosophers look

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forward to the time when men shall have automata as their slaves; but here are two young fools in willing, absurd slavery to an automaton, who bends them to her will as she pleases. Her *will!* I suppose she has no will, but she looks uncommonly like it. Let us call it caprice, then." Then I would go off into a reverie. "Are we all automata? Are we all mere chess-men on the board of life, moved hither and thither by a fate we cannot control? Well, if we are, then Amelia is the queen, and Burton and Calder are two knights of opposing colours."

One evening, a curious incident happened. Burton and Calder were as usual basking in the rays of their divinity, when by some mischance Amelia's brooch fell to the ground. Both the swains stooped to pick it up, but Burton was successful. Delighted at his triumph over his rival, he solicited the honour of re-fastening it. Calder watched him with jealous eyes. Suddenly a clumsy pair of waltzers, not looking where they were going, came hard into Burton. The brooch-pin was driven deep into the fair throat of Amelia. Burton started in horror; he began a savage oath, but stopping in time he pulled out the pin. Amelia had not uttered a sound.

Burton, speechless with dismay, was taking out his handkerchief to staunch the blood; Calder was holding the girl up as though she were fainting; a little crowd was gathering round them; when I, suddenly recollecting myself, rushed in. With the speed of lightning I whipped out my handkerchief and tied it round Amelia's neck.

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"Stand back, all of you!" I said in a tone of command. Even Burton and Calder fell back a little.

"My niece is very sensitive," I said. "The hurt is not great, but it would be as well that she should go home at once." A terror had possessed me; an overmastering fear of detection held me as in a vice.

"I assure you, uncle, that I am not hurt at all," said Amelia.

"Come along," I said sternly.

I hurried her off, finding just time to bid my adieus to my hostess, and to console the dumbfounded Burton by saying there was no danger.

We drove, not home, but direct to Moore's lodgings. Hurriedly we went upstairs. Moore was still up. He seemed surprised to see us.

"What do you want?" he said.

"Fools that we are," I answered. "Why, we were within a hair's-breadth of detection. *The creature can't bleed.*"

"Why, what need has she to bleed?" he said.

"Every need," I answered. "Doesn't a girl bleed when a pin is driven a good inch into her throat?"

"What do you mean?"

I explained the circumstances, and how I hoped I had for this once staved off discovery. I had been just in time.

"No," he said, when I had finished. "I never thought she would need to bleed. Strange that I should have forgotten that! They say that murderers always forget just one thing, just one little thing! But *they* take pains to get rid of the blood, and I ought to take pains to have it there."

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"Give it up, Moore," I said.

"Give it up! Never!" he shouted. "Give it up for a few drops of blood! Rather would I drain my own veins into hers! Rather go out and kill somebody. What does Mephistopheles say? 'Blood is a very peculiar sort of juice.' But I will make it."

Did I not know that no difficulties would deter him, that obstacles were in his eyes only incentives to further effort? If ever any man was ignorant of the word impossible, Moore was that man.

Miss Brooke was "ill" for a few weeks from "shock to the system." At the end of that time I saw Moore again. He and the Phantasm were in the room together. He gave me a pin.

"Prick her," he said.

I obeyed, not unwillingly; and to my horror something very like bleeding began.

"Yes," said Moore, "I have done it. I have looked up Shakespeare. Do you remember what Shylock says, to prove that a Jew is, after all, a man? 'Hath not a Jew eyes? hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer, as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? if you tickle us, do we not laugh? if you poison us, do we not die?' Now every one of these marks my Amelia has; so I say she is a genuine woman. Why, if you tickle her, she will laugh."

"No one is likely to tickle her," I said.

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"No; but after our last experience it is well to be prepared for all emergencies."

In this case, however, I did not make an experiment. Moore's word was enough. If the creature's smile was so detestable, what must her laugh be like?

After her time of seclusion, Amelia again appeared in Society, and was again the cynosure of all eyes, chiefly, however, of the four owned by Burton and Calder. These latter had never ceased to make inquiries after her health. I had often wondered whether Burton had noticed that the scratch of the pin had drawn no blood; but his conduct afterwards set me at ease. If he had seen it, he had probably thought that his Venus was too ethereal to bleed even the thinnest celestial ichor. The infatuation of youth can account for or put up with anything. At any rate, the young fellow admired her still; and Calder was equally possessed. In vain I assured them that she had no feeling; but this, though the literal truth, was met with derisive incredulity; and naturally I disliked to speak too often or too strongly against my niece. Blood, after all, even Amelia's manufactured blood, is thicker than water.

Though Amelia certainly could not feel, yet there was no doubt that in the future she would bleed if pricked, and I was free from anxiety on that score. But there was one thing which caused me considerable uneasiness. She was a girl of originality—indeed, I venture to think that there has never been a girl quite like her—yet there was a sameness, an artificiality about her which puzzled and alarmed me. To

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the same question she always and inevitably returned the same answer. On topics of the day she always had the same opinion, expressed in the same words. My rival, Sir John Bolus, who didn't like her for some reason or other, used to say that in her company he always felt as if talking to a very well-trained parrot. She uttered her opinions as if they had been learnt verbatim from someone else. Now there is nothing a true woman ought to do so frequently as to change her mind. Everybody should hear from her lips something different from what everybody else hears. It was on this point that I felt that Moore had failed; and it was from this that somehow or other I vaguely anticipated disaster. My apprehensions were but too well founded.

The time drew near for Calder and Burton to declare themselves. I need not say that, closely as I watched the doings of Amelia, I was not present on these auspicious occasions. But I can distinctly assert, nevertheless, from my knowledge of human nature, that the language of Calder, who came second, was almost precisely the same as that of Burton, who had the first chance. Hence it followed, with mathematical certainty, that Amelia's reply would be the same to both. Here was a pretty predicament! What I had blamed in her was her unwomanly constancy; but this very constancy had led—as I was sure both *à priori* and from the happy faces of the two young men—to a display of fickleness unparalleled in the whole history of womankind. Within an hour after accepting Burton the faithless creature

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accepted Calder in almost identically the same terms! Even the most heartless of coquettes had surely never been guilty of such conduct as this.

All this, however, was for the present merely a plausible conjecture, based upon a more or less certain knowledge of character. To make sure of it, I determined to ask. The result but too sadly confirmed my fears. Burton was almost delirious with joy.

"She is mine," he said; "and that beast Calder was never in it with her. To think that I should ever have been afraid of a cad like that!"

I congratulated him as in duty bound, and spent an hour with him which may have been pleasant to him, but became very tedious to me: so difficult was it to get him off his one eternal topic and induce him to talk like a rational being. At last, however, I managed to effect my escape, and made my way to Calder. He also received me very graciously.

"Old man," he said, "I have good news to tell you. Amelia has just consented to be engaged to me."

"Indeed!" I replied; "I am very pleased to hear it. You are a happy man, Dick."

"Yes," he said, "happier than I deserve. But what delights me almost as much as having won her is that she never gave a thought to that fellow Burton. If I had had any sense I must have seen that a girl like her could never be taken in by a wretched fellow like him; but somehow I managed to be jealous of him. Well, *that's* all over, thank goodness. I really believe I shall get to like him now I'm sure he can do me no harm."

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And so the young fellow chattered on, cutting me to the heart with almost every sentence that he uttered. What a dreadful awakening I was preparing for him! For of course the awful truth must be told him, that he and his rival had fallen in love with a sham. It would be an awkward moment for both of us. Should I tell him now, and get it over? On the whole I preferred to put it off, and consult Moore first. His fertile brain would suggest a way out of the difficulty. Perhaps he would make a second automaton that would do for one of the rival suitors, while the other kept to Amelia. At any rate, I preferred to get his advice before acting. He had made the Phantasm bleed; might he not get us out of this still more unpleasant position?

I told him of the new complication. To my surprise he made light of it.

"Well?" he said when I had finished my recital.

"Well?" I replied, "I should think that was enough."

"Why," he said, "I can see nothing wonderful in that. The wonder would be if they *hadn't* proposed to her. Women have had offers before now."

"But you can't intend to let things go on as they are?" I cried.

"That's exactly what I *do* intend," he answered. "Why should I interfere?"

"But think of it for one moment," I said. "Two men in love with the same automaton: two men in the position of accepted lovers at the same moment! Think of even *one* man in that position! How awful it is—why, it is too dreadful to think of!"

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"Then I shan't think of it," he answered coolly. "My dear fellow, what is there so strange in it all? Men have been in love with stone-like women before this. Men have given themselves up to heartless and soulless abstractions before this. Anyone who gets my Amelia will get *something*, at any rate, not a mere doll."

The plain fact dawned on me that Moore's extraordinary success had turned his brain. He had put so much of himself into his automaton that he had positively begun to regard her as a real living being, in whose veins flowed his own blood, in whose nostrils was his own breath. Eve was not more truly bone of Adam's bone than this Amelia was part and parcel of Moore's life. There was a mysterious union between them which gave me an uncanny feeling of sorcery. Could it be that by some unholy means Moore had succeeded in conveying some portion of his own life to this creature of his brain? I tried to dismiss the thought, for I am a man of science; yet it recurred again and again.

Moore was monomaniac on this point; yet, strange to say, my conviction of his lunacy did not lessen the influence he had acquired over me. His intellect was as keen, his will as powerful, as ever; and in spite of the utter monstrosity of his plans, and their inhuman cruelty, I lent myself to their fulfilment, and went desperately on to the bitter end. Let me hasten to the final catastrophe.

Burton and Calder were engaged to Amelia. It may be easily understood that now and then they

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came into collision. Sometimes things looked strange to them. Calder once demanded an explanation of his *fiancée* as to the frequency of Burton's visits. She gave him an account that satisfied him, and sealed it with a smile and a kiss that made him feel like a villain for ever doubting her. People wondered at the confidence with which both the young men asserted that they were the favoured suitors, and admired the daring skill with which Amelia played off one against the other. No one warned the young men; it was none of our business to interfere with them. English people do not care for meddling. As for me, had I not done enough by giving both of them a very plain piece of advice at the very outset, to which neither of them had paid the slightest attention, beyond insinuating that I was jealous of my own niece?

In such matters one young man is remarkably similar to another. Their very modes of speech tend to become the same. In asking Amelia to fix the day, need it be wondered at that they used precisely the same terms as have been used by all young men from the day when that nameless suitor of "pretty Jane" promised to buy the ring for his beloved? The result may be easily foreseen. Amelia, by some hidden law of her being, for which not she but perhaps Moore was to blame, could not help fixing the same day for both. Had a third candidate appeared on the scene, she would have fixed the same day for him also.

When I had heard this last fatal *dénoûment*, I

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confess that even Moore's influence could not keep me from taking a step on my own account. I would not destroy Amelia, much as I hated her for the trouble she had caused me. Something seemed to tell me that her death would be the certain death of Moore, whose life was bound up in hers as closely as the life of Jacob was bound up in that of Benjamin. By some subtle process, every time danger threatened Amelia, Moore's spirits seemed to sink; every time she surmounted the danger his spirits rose again. He had put himself into her. I would not destroy her; but I went to Calder and I gave him a pretty plain hint as to the position of affairs between her and Burton. He would not believe me.

"If I thought she was false," he said, "I would stab her where she stood, were it at the very altar. But it cannot be. She has pledged herself to me, and mine she is!"

"I know it for a fact," I answered, "that she has promised to marry Burton on the 29th of February."

"The twenty-ninth!" he cried. "Why, that is *my* day, the day on which she has promised to marry me!"

"Precisely so," I said. "What she means to do I don't know."

"But I know what *I* mean to do," he answered gloomily. "I will have it out with her."

"No violence!"

"None at all. Don't fear me. By God, what a heartless creature! But it can't be true. You are deceiving me!"

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"Too true. But find out for yourself."

"I took my leave, and went home. I did not intend to see Moore; I knew the strange spell of his eyes, and that even now I might be unable to resist his will.

I afterwards ascertained what Calder's plan was. He made no inquiry from Amelia; he simply went and begged her to put off the day of his marriage a month, from the twenty-ninth of February to the last of March. She readily agreed. He then went off to a shop he knew, and bought a sharp Spanish dagger.

The day of the marriage drew near, and nearer. Every preparation was completed. It was to be fashionable. St. George's was got ready in expectation of a large assemblage of people. At length the eventful morning dawned. I was to give the bride away to Burton, as after the postponement of Calder's wedding he was the only bridegroom left in the race. We came out and stood before the altar. As I passed along I noticed two figures in different parts of the building, both familiar to me. They were Moore and Calder. The former was untidy, evidently excited and restless. The latter was scrupulously neat; but he had a strangely determined look on his face. One hand was hidden under the breast of his frock-coat.

The service proceeded. Fancy a girl like this being told she was a daughter of Abraham, so long as she was not afraid with any amazement! Certainly a cooler, less perturbed daughter of the patriarch

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I never saw. She gave the responses in a clear, musical voice. They came to the fatal question—"Wilt thou have this man to be thy husband?" Before she could answer "I will," there was a sudden confusion; a man rushed forward, drew forth a dagger from his breast, and shouting "You shall not!" stabbed Amelia to the heart—or rather through the left side of her bodice. She fell to the ground, striking her head heavily as she fell against the rail. There was a whirr, a rush. The anti-phonograph was broken. I bent over her, and opened her dress to staunch the wound. Moore had made no provision for her bleeding *there*. As I drew out the dagger, it was followed by a rush of sawdust.

In the confusion of the strange discovery, no one noticed that a real death was taking place not twenty feet away. As the sexton was clearing out the church, he noticed a man asleep in one of the pews, leaning against a pillar. He went up and touched him; but there was no answer. He shook him; but the man was as heedless as Baal. It was Arthur Moore, and he was dead. He had put his life into his masterpiece; his wonderful toy was broken, and the cord of Moore's life was broken with it.

And as for me, why, I am no longer a fashionable physician. As I write, there are men about me, who talk of me as a *patient*.

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VI.

THE POET MALGRÉ LUI.

My father was a wealthy tallow-chandler by profession, and a poet by inclination. Indeed, had he not been the former, he could scarcely have afforded to be the latter; for I could never ascertain that a single copy of "Popkin's Odes on the Fashions" was actually bought. Their circulation was large, for they were invariably presented to customers with their Christmas bills and the almanac for the next year; but they were not a paying property. Indeed, the customers usually made them into spills to light the other portion of my father's wares. Thus my father was unknown to fame. But he had ambitions, and one of these was that I should be Poet Laureate. From my earliest years this was held before me as a prize to aim at.

"I have money," said my father, tapping his pocket; "and you shall have the best education money can buy. Had I had your education, I would have been Alfred Lord Popkin before I died, and I would have written 'Idylls of the Emperor.' But you shall have no excuse."

Before I was eleven there was nobody in the three

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kingdoms better equipped in all the mechanical arts of poetry than I. I had Walker's Rhyming Dictionary at my fingers' ends. I knew raise, praise, days, ways, maze, haze, and all the rest, as well as Swinburne himself: and there was not a metre at which I had not been set to try my hand. Mathematics, indeed, was taught me purely from the point of view of poetry. I could count up to fourteen, but not beyond with any accuracy, for my father said that lines of more than fourteen syllables were inharmonious. I knew all about anapæsts, scazons, amphibrachs, and dactyls before I was twelve.

My early efforts in verse were extraordinarily accurate as far as numeration went; they scanned and rhymed with the best. There was a want of thought in them it is true; and I did not care what word I used provided it filled up the metre; but my father was satisfied that time would make this all right. For example, one of my early love-poems ran thus:—

"My darling, the sofa of crimson
To which thou art wont to repair,
And lay thy indelicate limbs on,
Is most irrepressibly fair;
But ah! I maintain him a varlet,
A scoundrel, who dares to declare
That the sofa's immaculate scarlet
Can vie with thy hair!

"The grass in my father's plantation
Is tender and tidy and green;
My heart undergoes a sensation
Surveying that beautiful scene:

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But, brightest of elegant lasses!
I do not consider him wise
Who says that the green of the grass is
As green as thy eyes!

"That drooping and exquisite lily
That flowers in the circular vale,
Is tender, my darling, and chilly,
And chaste and retiring and frail:
But him I shall give to a jailor
To hang on a mulberry bough,
Who says it is either as frail or
As chilly as thou!"

My father observed several words in the above that might bear alteration; but, as the verses scanned, he told me they would do.

At the age of fourteen I went to Eton, on the understanding that I was to send home a rhyming letter every week. I spare the reader the infliction of these effusions. I had had no disasters with the masters; at Eton I had not been beaten; my Latin verse was scarcely worse than that of others, and so on. But I found, and that soon, that the power of rhyming was not one of those capacities for which boys admire each other. My habit of hardly ever speaking in prose gained me much ridicule and more kicks than I liked. I was dubbed a prig; and it became one of the choicest amusements of my schoolfellows to "have me on." But I flatter myself that I was no fool. I soon took the tone of the place, discontinued my poetical habits, played the games, and became, I trust, not unpopular. The

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weekly letters ceased to be an object of pride. I even appealed to my father to be allowed to write in prose; but the old man's evident pain was so great that I never repeated the request, and took to copying out pieces from Etonian prize-poems instead. These were received with great praise; and, in spite of some qualms of conscience, I kept up the plan for several years, my father becoming more and more proud of my abilities. A poem by Praed, in particular, brought me from my indulgent parent a five-pound note, which I spent in purchasing a new cricket-bag.

But alas! the time soon came when these subterfuges were no longer possible. Diligent practice at cricket had brought with it a total inability to write verses. My old powers in this line had utterly disappeared; and, indeed, I loathed verse, in consequence of my weekly letter, so much, that even if I had been able to versify, I could not have overcome my repugnance. I was now in the Fifth; I was on the borders of the Eleven; and I should as soon have thought of running out to Richardson as of writing an original poem, when I received a letter from my father which was the cause of all my subsequent misfortunes. It ran as follows:—

"MY DEAR ALGERNON"

(I was so called after a poet of some distinction, whom my father admired exceedingly)—"My dear Algernon, your poetical powers, as shown by your weekly letters, have increased to such a

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degree that it is high time the world should know of them. I have religiously treasured these verses, and now propose to publish a selection from them in a small volume. I have already mooted the idea to some of my friends, who think it admirable. Do not let your modesty stand in the way of a father's pride. Show these verses to any of your masters, and I am sure they would agree with me that publication is not only desirable but imperative. The only thing I ask from you is to select those by which you yourself would prefer to be judged.

"Your affectionate and admiring Father,

"ALFRED POPKIN."

Here was a pretty state of affairs! The old boy had been treasuring up these scraps from old prize-poems—I had collected a regular library of Newdegates, Chancellor's Poems, and school verses of all kinds by Praed, Moultrie, Stanley, Ruskin, John Mason Neale, and everybody else—and wanted me to publish them! The thing was not to be thought of for a moment. Yet how to prevent it? Could I tell the old man of the fraud that had been practised on him? You may believe, if you like, that it was not of myself I thought, but of the real distress I should give to the governor, who had behaved like a brick in the matter of pocket-money.

My friend Thompson was in my room when the letter arrived.

"Anything up, old man?" he asked.

"Yes, something beastly," I replied.

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"What's the row?" he said, "duns, or what?"

"Look here, Thompson," I answered. "You remember, when I first came, that I was always spouting poetry?"

"Yes, I do," he rejoined; "but you soon dropped that, old chap."

"Very soon," I said. "Now here's the point. When I was a kid the governor made up his mind that I was to be a poet. He's published some verses himself, you know."

"Didn't know," said Thompson.

"Nobody knows," said I, "thank goodness; that is, nobody here. Well, he made me learn all the poetic rot he could think of, and taught me how to rhyme reason with treason, and that sort of thing. That was all very well till I came here; but then he made me write him a poem every week."

"By Jove, that's coming it strong," said Thompson.

"So it was. Well, I didn't like to disappoint the old boy. He's been awfully kind, you know. So I got into the way of copying out verses from old books for him. Young Atkins did a good many for me. His writing's rather like mine, and I gave him a shilling a week for it."

"Well," said Thompson; "and so the old man has found it all out, has he? or young Atkins is striking for higher pay?"

"No; and that's the worst of it. The old man thinks them mine, and thinks them good. I've no doubt they *are* pretty fair, especially as not a line is my own. But now he wants me to publish them."

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"By Jove!" said Thompson again, and whistled.

"Beastly," said I; and we were both silent for a few minutes.

"I suppose you don't want to own up?" said Thompson after a pause.

"No," I said; "not because I mind telling him I've been a fraud, but because the old man thinks he's a judge of style, and all that sort of thing, you know. It would break his heart to find out how he'd been taken in."

"I see," said Thompson, and was silent again. After a few moments he said, "Would it do to publish them as 'Poems with Notes by Algernon Popkin?' Then, if anybody says the poems aren't yours, you can say you only meant to lay claim to the notes."

"Won't do," I said. "When the pater saw the reviews, he would find out all about it. They must not be published, anyhow."

"Printed for private circulation, then," said Thompson; "would the old boy give in to that?"

"Hardly," I answered; "he says it is time my abilities were known to a wider circle, or something like that. He wants me to be Poet Laureate before he dies."

"Well, then," said Thompson, "there is only one thing to do. You must tell him you are engaged in the composition of a great epic, on which you hope your reputation may rest; but these poems are so ephemeral and trifling that you might gain the reputation of a light and gay Society versifier. The

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epic must precede them. Then you must keep the epic going for a few years, till something turns up."

"You are right, Thompson," said I.

Accordingly I wrote, with my friend's assistance, the following letter to my father:—

"MY DEAR FATHER,

"I have been very much gratified by your appreciation of the verses I have sent you during the past months; but I could never consent to their being published as specimens of my powers. In the first place, they have been meant for your eye alone; and, though in the case of anyone else your criticism would be very exacting, yet your partiality makes you too lenient a judge in the case of a son. And, secondly, I may say that I am now engaged in the composition of a work of a more serious character than any of these trifles, a work which I trust posterity will not willingly let die. I cannot then permit myself to be judged by these light and trivial performances, when I trust in a few months to be able to appeal to the public with a volume of far more ambitious poetry. You will, I am sure, understand my motives in this matter.

"I remain,

"Your affectionate Son,

"ALGERNON SWINBURNE POPKIN."

My father's answer to this letter was what might have been expected. He expressed himself very

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warmly in favour of my ideas; promised to say nothing about my "juvenile verses" to anybody; hoped I would let him see portions of my epic as it progressed; and promised that no money should be spared to make its get-up correspond with its poetical merits.

"But," he added, "I sincerely trust that your devotion to this great work will not hinder you from competing for the Verse Prize next Speech Day. I trust to come down on that occasion, and to hear my son declaim verses worthy of his genius."

Unfortunately, having gained my end of postponing the evil day, I paid no attention to these last words of the letter. Under pretence that my poetical energies were entirely absorbed by the great epic, I began to write home in prose, and forgot entirely about the Verse Prize. It was not till several weeks had elapsed that I was reminded of my duties by receiving a letter from the governor, in which he renewed his promise to come down on Speech Day.

"Look here," I said to Thompson, "the old man fully expects me to get the Verse Prize. I have just as much chance of getting the moon. What am I to do?"

"Say you've gone in, and that the examiners have failed to do you justice," said Thompson.

"I don't like lying," I replied. "I must go in."

"Very well," said Thompson. "Go in if you like. It will be all the same in the end."

"I think I see how to manage it," I observed reflectively, after a pause. "Young Atkins ought to know some tags from the poets by now."

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"Ingenious chap, Atkins," said Thompson. "He's a bit of an inventor; he's made a machine for perpetual motion; and it goes for an hour, anyhow."

"He's done my things for me before."

"He's clever," went on Thompson. "He's an awfully good actor—changes his face, and that sort of thing. The other day he imitated Gladstone—got the old man's wrinkles and looks to a T. And his voice! He can do anything with it."

"Well," I said, "he's been copying poetry for several months on end. He must be bursting with rhymes and tags. I'll pay him five shillings to make up a poem for me. Then, of course, the poem is mine, and in a sense I shall have gone in. There's no chance of its getting the prize anyhow, so nobody will be any the worse."

"That's the trick," said Thompson.

Atkins, who, like all inventors and authors, was always hard up, consented to write a hundred lines on Sir Garnet Wolseley for five shillings. The poem proved to be, as I had anticipated, a mere patchwork of lines from a dozen authors, more or less neatly tacked together, the proportion of genuine Atkins being very small. For example, I remember that some of the opening lines ran pretty much as follows, for all the world like a copy of prize hexameters:—

> "Sir Garnet Wolseley! Phœbus, what a name
> To fill the speaking-trump of future fame!
> Hosts have been known at that dread sound to yield,
> And oft has Wolseley gained the stricken field.

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Fame is the spur which the clear spirit doth raise
To walk in wisdom's unobtrusive ways:
Let observation, with extensive view,
Look on this picture and on that one too:
Sir Garnet Wolseley was a citizen
Of credit and renown; a man of men;
He made a man at whom the world grew pale,
First fear, then shudder, and at last turn tail.
Thus shall his name for evermore be heard,
Familiar to us as a household word."

It was hard to believe that this collection of tags would win a prize. I gave Atkins his five shillings with perfect content, sent in the verses, and wrote to the governor to say that my prize-poem was in the hands of the examiners. As for the epic, I said it was rapidly taking shape in my mind. It was, I said, to be on the exploits of Charlemagne.

Alas for human foresight! I was to be a poet in spite of myself. If bees hummed round Pindar's cradle, a regular swarm must have buzzed round mine. To the utter astonishment of Thompson, myself, and even of Atkins, the poem gained the prize. Whether the examiners were fools, or whether there was no other poem sent in, I do not know. In any case, I was disgusted at the false position in which fate was placing me. I consulted Thompson as to my future conduct. Atkins I ignored; he had been overpaid already for his trash, and had no right to expect a prize in addition. Besides, I knew he durst not peach.

"What shall I do?" I said to Thompson.

"Own up," he replied.

"No," I answered; "if the matter came to the

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governor's ears he would be terribly distressed. Not that I mind owning up for myself, you know. Besides, so far there is nothing dishonourable in it. I have only to let Atkins say he had used my name the better to conceal the authorship. I am not afraid of the consequences of a confession. But for the pater's sake I don't see how I can let on."

"Then read the poem and give Atkins the prize," said Thompson.

I determined to follow this advice. I summoned Atkins, and told him that for private reasons of my own I was going to claim the poem; but as he had done the work I would give him three guineas, the value of the prize. He seemed rather disgusted, and said I seemed to want to bribe him to hold his tongue.

"Nonsense," I retorted. "The poem is mine already. Didn't I pay you for it before it was written?"

He muttered an assent.

"Then," I said, "I think I'm doing something out of the common in paying you for a thing that's my own already. Anyhow, here's the money. Take it or leave it, as you like. Go and tell the Head that you put on my name in order that my reputation might help you to get the prize."

"No one knows the name," he said. "It's put in a sealed envelope."

"Well," I replied, "whose writing is the poem in, yours or mine?" For I had copied out the verses. "Are you going to say you forged my name or not?"

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"Give me the money," he said at last. "It will come in useful. For they ne'er pardon who have done the wrong, as *your* poem has it," he added maliciously.

I flung him the pieces contemptuously. On Speech Day I declaimed the verses with immense success. My father cheered vociferously because they were his son's, and even Atkins could not help applauding, because they were his own. But I felt uncomfortable. I had made a reputation to which I should find it very hard to live up. The governor, as we patrolled the grounds, made himself very objectionable by asking me to show him some of the stanzas of my Charlemagne.

"They are in the rough still," I said; "I hardly like you to see them yet."

"I might suggest some points," he urged.

"That will come later," I protested. "Besides, the prize-poem has been occupying my thoughts lately." Which was strictly true.

"When will your first canto be finished?" persisted my father.

"I am sketching it out in prose," I replied; "it won't be in verse for some time."

I hated this duplicity; but it was all necessary to my plan of sparing the old boy any distress of mind. He was a little troubled, seeming to fancy that I showed a want of confidence in him. But I gave him to understand that my reticence arose merely from my desire to startle him with the finished excellence of my work. It would seem much better,

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I pointed out to him, if presented as a rounded whole than if he saw it in driblets. Thus the evil hour was staved off for the present.

It would be tedious to relate the manifold devices by which I kept my father on the tenterhooks of unfulfilled expectation during the next few years. Suffice it to say that I was able to go to Oxford in peace, leaving Atkins behind at Eton, and seeing Thompson depart for Cambridge, with considerable sorrow; for his advice had been invaluable in extricating me from tight places.

But no sooner was I at Oxford, with what the sporting papers called a "cricket reputation" to maintain, than my troubles began afresh. My father insisted on my going in for the Newdegate. It was in vain that I pointed out to him that no Newdegate prize-poet had ever done anything afterwards. He was peremptory. My light must not be hid under a bushel. He even held out the prospect of publishing my old Etonian verses if I didn't look after my own reputation better. If I didn't care for fame, he must secure it for me. At this threat I was in despair. Thompson was not at hand to advise, nor was Atkins any longer to be coerced. What was to be done? The time for "owning up" seemed to have arrived; and I trembled at the thought of the pain the dear old governor would suffer when he found that his boy was no poet after all. I was always unselfish; and unselfishness has been my ruin.

While I was cursing my fate in my easy-chair, and

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gnashing my teeth in impotent rage, I was suddenly startled by a knock at the door. As the visitor waited for my "Come in" before entering, I knew he was no undergraduate; and indeed his appearance was by no means Oxonian. He was clad in a tattered and seedy coat, and the baggiest of trousers adorned his nether limbs. Under his arm he carried a dirty brown-paper parcel. I wondered how my scout could have admitted so disreputable a customer.

"Well," I said, after a moment of astonished survey, "and what may be your business?"

For answer he drew out a curious instrument from under his arm, and laid it on the table.

"What's this?" I cried, rather irritated.

"This, sir," he said—and his gentlemanly tones contrasted strangely with his tatterdemalion appearance—"this, sir, is a poetry-machine."

"And what have I to do with poetry-machines?" I cried.

"Mr. Atkins——" he began; and there was an insolent twinkle in his eye which made me angry and fearful at the same time.

But I pulled myself together.

"Well," I said.

"Mr. Atkins, senior," he went on, "is an electrician, and I am one of his hands. I am a bit of an inventor. This is a machine which will turn prose into poetry. I offered it to old Mr. Atkins, who said it would be a drug in the market; but young Mr. Atkins, who was by when I showed it, was much

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interested. He told me that you were likely to pay me a good price for the machine; so I took your name and address, and here I am."

"Did Mr. Atkins say anything more?" I asked, very foolishly, I confess; but I was worried and suspicious.

"No, except that you were a poet, and had won the Verse Prize at Eton. I thought it strange that a poet should want my machine, for it isn't meant for Shakespeares. They can do without it. It's for people who can't write poetry and want to. Still, I thought I could do no harm in coming. There's a prize called the Newdegate here, I believe; the machine's just suited for that."

I looked at him with redoubled suspicion. There was something demoniac in his face. Whence did he get his knowledge?

"Stay," I said; "how do I know you can do what you profess? Let me see how your machine works."

"Thus," he replied. "I copy out a piece of prose on paper of the proper size, and fasten it here, on this type-writer. Then I turn the handle, and the piece will come out as verse. If you like I will show you the mechanism."

"No," I said, "let me see the result; I don't care about the mechanism."

"Here is a piece of type-written prose. You will recognise it; it is a bit of Macaulay. I place it here carefully; it has to lie very flat, or the verses will be lame and halting. I smooth it with the roller to

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take out all harshness and want of melody; and now I slowly turn the handle."

He turned it with great deliberation. It was fully five minutes before a piece of paper emerged at the other end.

"Here is the poetry," he said. "It is the same piece, as you will see, transformed by slight omissions and alterations of unsuitable words; but in all essentials, as far as matter is concerned, it is unchanged. In form, of course, it is poetry and not prose."

"But how am I to know it is genuine?" I cried. "You may have put in a piece of your own composition, and simply substituted it for the original."

"Select any piece you like," he said calmly. "Let me just type-write it and put it in, and then see the result."

"Here," I said, snatching up the first book I could find, which happened to be the "True History of Joshua Davidson." "Turn this into verse, and and I'll believe anything."

The man glanced at the passage.

"It is a hard one," he said, "and the machine will take time to do it, and perhaps grind rather harshly. Still, it is not likely to fail even with this. I shall pass it through twice, as it is so tough; first to reduce it to metre, and then to put in the rhymes."

The piece ran as follows: "Furthermore, philanthropy to Lord X—— was an occupation and a reputation. He had no turn for abstract politics, no head for diplomacy, no taste for literature; he was not an artist nor a mechanician, but he was

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ambitious, and he liked distinction. So, dabbling among the poor, and touching the grave social problems besetting them delicately, following them to their haunts, and relieving their immediate distress, pleased both his kind heart and his vanity; and he did substantial good of a fragmentary kind, if his motives would scarce bear severe scrutiny."

And this was the form in which it appeared after the machine had been at work on it for ten minutes:—

"And, furthermore, philanthropy
Was to Lord X. an occupation
As well as bringing reputation;
He did not love diplomacy:
My Lord was not a politician,
No artist, nor a mechanician,
Yet was he not without ambition;
He liked distinction; so, to dabble
Among the unbefriended rabble,
And touching very delicately
The problems that concerned them greatly,
And following them to their haunts,
Relieving their immediate wants,
Pleased both his heart and vanity;
And so he did substantial good,
Although his motives scarcely would
Bear a severer scrutiny."

"This is very poor poetry," I observed.

"That is because you have not given the machine time," he replied. "Another turn or two would have put the lines into a more regular order, though of course they would have differed more from the original than they do at present."

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"It is really remarkable," I said, forgetting my suspicions in my admiration of the genius which could conceive and execute such an apparatus.

"It is indeed," he replied, with pardonable complacency. "And the advantage of it is that no one need fear poverty of ideas. Put Burke's 'Reflections' into the machine, and the thoughts are retained unimpaired, the only difference being in the expression. There are very few poets who, as far as matter goes, could improve on my machine."

"Just so," I answered. "A Newdegate on this principle could scarcely be wanting in profundity."

"No," he replied; and again I observed a malicious twinkle in his eye. "Nor in accuracy, either. For example, a poem on Charlemagne——"

He paused, while his steely eye seemed to read me through and through.

"A poem on Charlemagne, for example, might be made by passing Gibbon or Hodgkin through my machine."

"You are a scholar," I said, with a feeble attempt at sarcasm.

"I know a good many things," he retorted. "But the chief point is, what will you give me for the machine?"

"Ten pounds," I said, thinking he would be cheaply got rid of at the price; for I was beginning to loathe his cunning eyes and air of superiority. Even if the apparatus was a mere fraud, it would be something to get him out of the room.

"Ten pounds!" he cried. "I ask a thousand, and I will not take a penny less."

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"You must be mad," I cried. "How am I to raise a thousand pounds?"

"Get the Newdegate, and your father will think a thousand pounds a trifle," he said, with a horrible leer. "On the other hand, if he knew how the Eton prize-poem was got——"

"I won't pay a thousand," I cried. "You might as well ask a million."

"Then," he said, edging up closer, with horrid familiarity, "will you give me fifty pounds every time I procure you a poem?"

"That is better," I answered. "But it happens that I only want one."

"You will want others before long. The Laureateship demands a few every now and then."

"I don't want to be Laureate," I said sullenly.

"You'll *be* Laureate, whether you wish to be or not," he observed; and somehow I knew he was speaking the truth.

"I will give you a guarantee of good faith," he went on. "I will leave you the machine, and teach you how to work it, on condition you promise to send me fifty pounds for every poem you produce by its means. Is this a bargain? If you keep to it, I will stay away; if you don't, *I will come again.*"

The grin with which he spoke these last words was horrible to behold.

Anything to get rid of him. I promised.

"A little formality," he said, producing a document. "Sign here."

I signed helplessly; and he removed the paper

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before I could see his own name, but not before I saw that I had unconsciously used red ink in signing. Then, with a bow and a diabolical smile, he disappeared, leaving the accursed machine on the table.

The reader may not unnaturally think, as I occasionally catch myself doing, that I was remarkably credulous during this interview. The idea of a poetry-machine is indeed so extraordinary that a little more scepticism than I showed was to have been expected. But there was something about my visitor—a look as of a superior intelligence—which in spite of his ragged garments compelled belief. I never, in fact, doubted him; and my request that he should exhibit the powers of his apparatus was not made to strengthen my confidence, but to gain time for reflection. Besides, he had arrived opportunely. I had just been wishing for some contrivance by which I could, so to speak, make poems which were not my own; and I have usually observed that, as soon as we form a definite wish to do something a little shady, assistance is likely to arrive. For example, if a man wishes to cheat in an examination —I am, of course, not here drawing on my own experience—it is rarely indeed that he has to wait long for his chance. As soon, in fact, as a man's inclinations have cooked him into suitable food, the devil is very near to devour him. And, alas! it is terribly difficult to keep oneself in a condition that the devil will find indigestible!

My enemy had gone, but his machine was still on my table. I had perforce to investigate it. On the

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outside I saw the mysterious inscription "T. A. fecit." These were obviously the initials of my disreputable visitor; but I could form no guess as to the name, nor did I feel inclined to write to Atkins to ask for information. The construction of the affair was remarkably simple. The front part was a type-writer. Next, I could detect the line-cutters, and with a magnifying glass could see how the apparatus was to be shifted so as to produce decasyllabics, octave couplets, anapæstic dimeters, and the like. Behind was the rhyme-maker, which consisted apparently of a set of knife-edges, of extraordinary sharpness, which revolved with great rapidity, and soon transformed the most intractable word into a synonym that satisfied the requirements of metric and rhyme. This had caused the grinding sound which I had noticed when T. A. was operating on the passage from Mrs. Lynn Linton. Still further to the rear was the polishing portion, which reduced the pauses to respectability, and smoothed the poem into Tennysonian harmony. This, I knew, had not been used by my friend in dealing with the passage mentioned, for I found that it required an hour to work it properly. Nothing seemed to have been forgotten. There was an alliterating portion, which allowed you to produce subtle effects, at intervals easily regulated, by the repetition of the same consonant. There was also a vowel-alterer, to prevent the recurrence of similar vowel sounds; and even a contrivance for the occasional use of onomatopœia. A few devices for archaisms and tropes, of astonishing simplicity and

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neatness, completed the apparatus. It was certainly no fraud. T. A., whoever he was, was no ordinary man.

My examination of the thing occupied several hours: indeed, I forgot my dinner, and only woke up to the world at midnight. Even then I felt no inclination for sleep. I brewed myself some coffee, and deliberated on my course of action. Under the influence of the stimulant my brain became clear. I saw that my scruples were ridiculous. If a man invents a machine for poaching eggs, he has a right to eat them. And, if he buys the machine, instead of inventing it, he has a purchased right, and no one can blame him. Just so with my poems. They would no more cease to be mine because I had a way of making them easily, than Caxton's copies of the "Chesse" ceased to be his because he could multiply them more rapidly than the penmen who envied him. No; there was no fraud in the matter, any more than there had been when I made use of the powers of Atkins to gain the Etonian prize. After all, what *is* ownership? If what a man pays for isn't his own, what *is?*

Soothed by these comfortable reflections, I prepared for bed. Just as I was about to get in, I was startled by a strange sound, like a laugh, close at my elbow. It was peculiar and unearthly, combining, as I thought, the howl of a wild beast with the cachinnation of a triumphant demon. Was a cat in the room? I lit the candle, and searched diligently, but found nothing. Then I remembered that

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Smith, who slept below me, had been suffering from bronchitis. Doubtless it was his cough that, working on my excitable nerves, had caused me to suffer this strange terror. Nevertheless, I was very uncomfortable for some hours, and did not really sleep till morning.

Next day my calmness returned. It was growing near to the day for sending in the Newdegate. I resolved to spend the morning in completing the poem. The subject, fortunately, was General Gordon, on whom the *Times* had an excellent leader. I typewrote the article, and carefully put it through the machine, taking care to give the knife-edges plenty of time, and to secure the necessary ten-syllable versification. The first attempt was, however, a failure. The poem rhymed and scanned, but I had forgotten to sprinkle a little archaism over it, and to make it alliterate neatly and elusively. At the second trial I removed some of these defects; and at the third, the verses, considered from the point of view of a Newdegate competition, were perfect. I was absolutely certain that no other candidate would send in a copy so mechanically accurate, so neatly turned, or so beautifully polished, as mine. Success was certain. I wrapped the poem in an envelope, with my motto, "*Fraudis inimicus*," at the foot; in another envelope I enclosed my name and college, and sent both to the Registrar.

Events turned out as might have been expected. The other candidates, some of whom had real ability, tried to be original; but they occasionally lapsed

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into inexactness, and had no chance. Next term I heard without surprise that I was Newdegate prize-man. My father came to the Encaenia, and enjoyed, as only a father can, the mixture of personal and vicarious pride in his son's triumph. I read the poem amid great applause. Just as I was stepping down from the pulpit, I again heard the laugh I have before described; and again it chilled my blood. I looked round in undisguised terror, but could see nothing.

"You are pale, old chap," said Smith.

"Triumph too much for his nerves," said Robinson, another of my friends, who had stayed up to hear the poem, and to attend the champagne breakfast I gave in its honour.

Next morning the breakfast came off. It was spoilt by the presence of Atkins, who appeared just as it was beginning. He had, he said, arrived in Oxford late the night before, and could not leave without seeing his old chum. He congratulated me effusively on my success; but told the other men that it was not unexpected. Everybody at Eton, he said, who had heard my prize-poem there, had prophesied great things of me. I made several signs to him to stop; but the tactless fellow did not seem to understand them.

"You know," he went on, "that I copied out Popkin's poem at Eton, and I was struck with its beauties."

"Leave the poem alone," I said; "we don't talk shop here."

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"You are modest," he replied, having apparently imbibed more champagne than was good for him. "I thought this breakfast was to celebrate your poetical abilities."

"We can't talk of them all the morning," I cried irritably.

"Don't be angry," he retorted. "After all there is precious little poetical ability required to win the Newdegate."

At this some of the men seemed to think Atkins was going too far; and after a few more minutes he took his hat and said he must catch his train.

"Good riddance," said Robinson. "Your friend seems a bit of a bounder, Popkin."

"He is a decent fellow enough, as a rule," I answered; "but he never could stand wine a little bit."

The conversation then turned to cricket, and Atkins was soon forgotten.

At one o'clock the men departed, and I began to prepare for going down, having promised the governor to join him at the 2.30 train. Suddenly there was a knock at the door, and again entered my old friend of the tattered coat and the two initials.

I stared at him angrily,

"What do *you* want?" I cried.

"It was a good poem," he said, irrelevantly. "I heard it all, and it was *very* good. I kept in some time, but at the end I *had* to laugh, it was *so* good."

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"*You* there?" I ejaculated.

"Of course," he replied. "I wasn't going to stay away from my own poem. Didn't you hear me?"

Then it *was* his laugh that I had heard! Was he devil or man?

"You want to know why I'm here, I suppose?" he asked.

"I want to know when you're going," I retorted.

"When you give me my fifty pounds," he replied.

I had forgotten my engagement to pay him fifty pounds for every poem I produced. But I saw I had put myself in his power; he might blackmail me if I refused. I drew out my cheque-book and signed for the amount.

"There it is; go," I said.

"I go," he answered, as he took the cheque. But before he left, he held it up for me to see, and again, to my horror, I saw I had unwittingly signed it in red ink.

There is no need for me to enter into detail with regard to the events of the next two or three years. I managed to stave off the governor, who was still pestering me for poetry, by saying that, as Newdegate prizeman, I had a reputation to maintain, which must not be jeopardised by hasty work. I had several awkward moments with men who persisted in treating me as a literary character, and in quoting tags from poets I had never read. My tutor, also, who used to look over my essays, could not refrain from saying that my English prose was quite unworthy of an English poet. But I pulled through, somehow;

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and before I went down I had gained my blue at cricket and taken a very decent third in Greats.

"Now," said my father, "you have leisure to devote yourself entirely to your great work. I am fairly well to do, thank God"—the old boy was sincerely pious—"and I intend to allow you a thousand a year as long as I live. But really, Algernon, I hope you will take more pains to cultivate your undoubted gifts than you have done. It is several years since you gave a piece of yours to the world. Surely it is time to begin to *do*, rather than to waste your hours in mere planning. You will be a Coleridge, an inheritor of unfulfilled renown, unless you are careful. Do not be a mere 'Might have been.'"

My affectionate nature has always been a hindrance to me. When the old chap spoke like this, I could not resist him; for I really appreciated his kindness to me. In an evil hour I promised to begin my Charlemagne the very next morning.

"It will be a little more than the trouble of writing," he replied; "for I am sure it is all in your head already."

I was determined to have no more to do with T. A. I would write this poem myself. Accordingly, I took from my father's library a Gibbon, a Hodgkin, an Eginhard, and a translation of Ariosto; and resolved that what diligence could do should be done. I had been able to rhyme once, and I still knew a trochee from a cæsura. Perhaps my powers might come back to me.

I worked hard for several days, and was cheered

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on by the visits of my father, who was always poking his head in to ask whether the afflatus was coming, or whether the Muse was propitious. During the first week I succeeded in composing ten bad lines, containing a wretched invocation to the Muse to assist her votary in a task far beyond his unaided powers. Never was prayer more earnest, and never was it more unsuccessful. I showed the lines to the governor, and even his tenderness could not hide his disappointment.

"Are you ill, Algernon?" he said. "These verses are unworthy of you."

"I *am* ill, I think," I replied. Indeed, I was worried and out of sorts.

"Forgive me, my boy," said the governor. "I have been forgetting your health in my own ambitions. You must rest. What would you like to do?"

"I shall go abroad, I think," I answered, snatching at the respite like a drowning man at a plank. "I have heard from Thompson. He is going to Egypt; it would do me good to go with him."

"You shall," said the kind-hearted old boy, though tears were in his voice as he spoke. But I could not think of him. The relief of throwing this accursed task aside for a few months was too intense to permit of thought for others. I hurriedly wrote to Thompson, proposing companionship. He willingly agreed, and we set out for the East, hoping that something would turn up before we returned.

I wandered for a year, keeping up my travels long

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after Thompson had returned. At last, in sheer shame, I could stay away no longer. I reached home in the pink of health, and apparently equal to facing any amount of work for several months. But I was shocked at the change in the governor. He was thin, gray, and ghastly pale.

"You are very ill, father," I said, with real concern.

"Yes, my boy. I am not long for this world. But I shall die happy if I can see your Charlemagne in print before I go."

Here was the old dilemma again! But, if my soul was the forfeit, I would not let the old boy die in sorrow. Next morning I began again the weary task; but if anything with worse result than ever. The old invocation was to the new, in fact, as champagne of '58 is to that of '98. I did not know what to do. Could I break the governor's heart, and send him to his grave some months before his time, by telling him I never had been a poet and never should be? As I was turning the matter over and over in my mind, my eye fell on the locked trunk that contained my poetry-machine.

"What must be, must," I said desperately. I pulled out the machine, type-wrote a page of Gibbon, and put it in. It came out, after half an hour, an exquisitely polished and harmonious piece of verse. I took it to my father, whose old eyes glistened with pleasure as he read it.

"This is beautiful, my boy," he cried. "You will achieve imperishable renown."

Once begun, the work went on rapidly; and in

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six months, the great epic was finished. My father roused himself from his sick bed to correct the proofs. It came from the press with all the advantages which wealth could procure; hand-made paper, large type, and exquisite binding. On the day it appeared, I had another visit from my seedy friend; but I was too weary to heed him. I flung him his cheque, and dismissed him. He turned to go with a smile of hatred.

"You will rue this day," he muttered.

"Do your worst," I retorted.

The reviews of Charlemagne were encomiastic to the last degree. One, which was signed by Atkins, drew attention to the exquisite smoothness of the versification, which, he said, might have been turned out by a mill. He laid stress also on my historical accuracy, due, no doubt, to my having consulted the works of Hodgkin, Gibbon, and others. The work, he said, was prose in its exactness and truth to life, poetry in its mastery of all technical forms, figures of speech, and metrical canons. Somehow, this review, which delighted my father, did not please me. But, as it stood, it was an unstinted panegyric.

I had thus the reputation, not only of a poet, but of an epic poet. No great epic had been written for many years; indeed it might almost be said that mine was the first since Milton. The critics were unanimous in praising me for not having shrunk from the grand style, and declared that my courage in doing so had only been equalled by the success which had attended it. None but a great writer, they said,

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had the right to attempt the epic form; but it was precisely in that form that the great writer found his true sphere. In fact, so unanimous were these encomiums, that one might have thought that, like the poems, they had been produced by a machine. But my father read them with the utmost avidity.

"You will be Poet Laureate yet, before I die," he said.

He was right. The old incumbent of the office, having attained immortality in this world, went to seek another form of it in the next; and the public voice, which, however, I was far from confusing with that of the Deity, pointed me out as undeniably the right man to wear the mantle of the vanished bard. The Prime Minister, who was no reader of poetry, yielded to popular opinion, the more readily as he had ascertained that I was on his side in politics. And thus it happened that before I was thirty I was the official organ-voice of England. I took the news to my father, who was then actually on his death-bed. He was pleased beyond measure, chanted a kind of Nunc Dimittis, and gave up the ghost in the very midst of congratulating me on my new honour.

It may well be believed that I was far from congratulating myself. My blushing honours were a good deal thicker than I liked. I discovered, if I did not know it before, that the pangs of a man who is kept out from a post which he knows himself to deserve, are as nothing compared with those of a man who is in a post to which he knows himself unequal. The various sarcastic poems, written by unsuccessful

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candidates for the Laureateship, which varied the chorus of approbation on my appointment, I read with interest, and knew to be just. I was told that "the man who writes by line and rule is just the man to write to order;" I was complimented on the "icy regularity and splendid nullity" of my versification; I was the new Pope, who had "made poetry a mere mechanic art." All these strictures I knew to be deserved.

Meanwhile, the magazines were crying for copy. I could not find it in my heart to disappoint them; and the machine ground out verses with monotonous precision. For every copy I received fifty pounds, all of which I had to give to my unwelcome visitor, who came with absolute regularity the day after publication.

But the climax was at hand. As time went on, I observed a something wrong with the machine. Wear and tear were injuring it. I discovered that it worked with less and less accuracy; the rhymes became more inexact, the versification more irregular. At last, when writing a poem on Lord Roberts, I found that where I had intended to put in an effective archaism, the machine, by some error, inserted alliterations instead. I inspected it in vain; I could discover no visible defect. But the poem was a failure; and the reviews were sure to observe its weakness.

When my visitor called for his fifty pounds—I had long ceased to treat him with common politeness—I ordered him to mend the machine.

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He became insolent.

"What is wrong with it?" he asked.

"Why," I said, "it won't work accurately. Sometimes it won't rhyme at all; sometimes it scans badly. It is a fraud."

"It always *was* a fraud," he said.

"You can't expect me to pay you fifty pounds for *these* wretched performances," I exclaimed.

"Oh, but I do," he answered. "You promised to pay me so much per poem, quite apart from quality. Besides, how do *you* know that these poems are worse than the others?"

"They scan badly, and the rhymes are poor," I said.

"You know very well," he retorted, "that the others were equally bad; nay worse; for nothing is more detestable than oily mechanical smoothness. It is true the public liked them; but the public likes anything that jingles."

"Anyhow," I answered, "I must provide what it likes. Will you mend the machine or not?"

"I will do it for twenty thousand pounds," he replied; "not a penny less."

"Go to the devil," I cried in a fury.

"No," he said; "if so, I should have to stay with you."

"Then do your worst," I said more furiously than ever.

He bowed politely, and departed.

In two or three days I received a command to celebrate a royal marriage. Swearing at my evil fate,

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I drew out the machine, to try it for what I was resolved should be the last time. I copied out an article on the subject from the *Standard*, and inserted it in the block. Very carefully and slowly did I work; and not till two hours had passed did I draw out the paper. Never, alas! were two hours more utterly wasted. The lines were of more than Pindaric irregularity as to length; the rhymes were now at the beginning, now in the middle, never at the end; the alliterations were confused beyond description; and the sound was an echo to nonsense. Such verse was never seen before, in Bedlam or out of it. I groaned aloud. Detection was inevitable now. Royalty would frown and the world would laugh. I ran the paper through the machine again; and the result was only not worse than before because a worse was impossible. In despair I seized the machine and threw it into the fire. Grasping the poker I smashed it into a thousand pieces, and watched it burn with savage joy.

Thus engaged, I did not observe that the door had opened, and that my old enemy was in the room. A horrible laugh made me conscious of his presence. I turned round, saw him, and, with all the wild fury of hate, rushed upon him with the poker. He smiled contemptuously.

"Calm yourself, and sit down," he said; and, obeying an instinct of inferiority, I did so.

"Speak, you fiend!" I cried, "and put me out of my misery. Who are you, and why do you torment me thus?"

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"Do not be unhappy," he replied. "You are not the first Poet Laureate who has printed manufactured verses. As for me, I won't press you too hard. You shall have a new machine; for I have still an affection for my old chum. Don't you know me? I am Atkins."

* * * * * *

This afternoon I went to inspect the new machine. It is much larger and more perfect than the other, measuring about six feet each way.

"Look at it!" cried Atkins, as he pointed out its beauties. "It'll do *anything*. If you put in a bullock, it would turn out a rhymed advertisement of Bovril!"

"Would it indeed?" I answered. "Then here goes."

Obeying a sudden impulse, I pushed him into the receiving-pan, and turned the handle with maniac energy. One shriek—no more—the whirr of the wheels drowned the rest. I listened with delight to the knife-edges, as they dissected my enemy into rhyme. Sweating with toil, I laboured for three-quarters of an hour. At the end, I pulled him out, and found that he alliterated to perfection, and that his archaisms were all that could be desired. But he plagiarised to the last. The two final lines were:—

> "Old Nature, when she came this work to scan,
> Might say to all the world, This was a man."

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VII.

MEMORIA PONDEROSA.

"AND so, ladies and gentlemen, having shown you all the somewhat complicated processes required for complete liquefaction, and having exhibited the different kinds of apparatus which I have used in the various stages of my work, allow me to pass round to you a few specimens of this latest and perhaps not least amazing of modern chemical discoveries—liquefied memory, at a temperature of minus 1096 centigrade."

The lecturer paused for the expected burst of cheering, which must indeed have rewarded him for his months of sedulous toil; for Ranjitsinhji himself, at the conclusion of an innings of four figures, could hardly receive more vociferous applause. Even the most distinguished visitors, such as the Prince of Wales, the Polynesian Ambassador, and the President of the University of Tristan d'Acunha, could not refrain from the wildest demonstrations of enthusiasm. Hints of the great discovery had indeed been allowed already to penetrate into the world at large; but the Professor, anxious that no one should be able to anticipate him in the publication

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of his results, had scrupulously kept the public in that condition of conjectural astonishment which is most provocative of paragraphs in the papers and of large audiences at the apocalyptic lectures in which secrets are revealed. For Professor Magus, though so highly distinguished as a man of science, was free neither from the ordinary jealousies of humanity nor from the Apostolic creed that the labourer is worthy of his hire. Having charged a guinea a head, and having seen hundreds turned away at the doors, he had a right to look back on the meeting with satisfaction, and to look forward to a life of cultured ease in the future.

The chairman, a nobleman of great distinction, associated with successes on the turf and with great achievements in philanthropic fields, closed the meeting with a few well-chosen words, which proved clearly that the Professor would have found very little retentive power in the noble lord on which to exercise his abilities. It appeared that the lecturer had done honour to English science; that memory, when subjected to very high pressure and a very low degree of cold, could be stored up in bottles for future use; and that we were all very grateful to Professor Magus for his highly entertaining and instructive discourse, which would live in our memories until they were liquefied by death. Laughter and cheers, during which the meeting broke up.

Among the audience not the least interested was myself. I had come to the lecture, not, like the majority, either to kill time or to be in the fashion,

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nor, like the minority, to sneer and to pick holes, but to gain practical instruction. My memory had long been a trouble to me; it retained isolated verses, facts, and dates with an irregular and bewildering mixture of accuracy and inaccuracy; it was never to be relied on in any real emergency; it had never served me when it was necessary for me to be precise and consistent in telling stories which I wished to be received with credulity; but it never failed to keep before my mind everything that was particularly disagreeable. Certain episodes in my past life, for example, which I would gladly have forgotten, my memory persisted in bringing back to my notice at the most unfortunate moments. Often in bed, when I desired anything rather than to dwell on the past, this unfortunate retentiveness of mine has brought the blush of shame to my cheek, and tinged my brow with a colour which I felt though I did not see. Not that I would imply that there was anything in my past of a really disgraceful nature: the reader will be perfectly aware that the things at which he blushes are not the bad actions of his life so much as the more or less ridiculous mistakes he has made. He blushes not because he has been immoral, but because he has been foolish. Still, whatever the cause, I was anxious to dissociate myself from my past, and to remember it no more than the dragon-fly remembers the follies of the grub. Yet the difficulties of destroying these memories without destroying the reminiscent faculty altogether, had hitherto deterred me from making a serious effort to obliterate

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them from my consciousness. The news that Professor Magus was able to isolate, and even to liquefy, individual items of memory was therefore exceedingly interesting to me; and, from the first day on which I read in the paper the somewhat wild rumours current on the subject, I had resolved that nothing should deter me from pursuing the investigation to the utmost. I had therefore willingly paid my guinea for admission to the lecture, had listened eagerly to every sentence, had endeavoured to disentangle its meaning from the maze of scientific terms in which it was involved, and was now prepared to push the matter home by securing a private audience of the Professor.

Accordingly, no sooner was the lecture over, and the crowd of congratulating celebrities finally dismissed, than I made my way to the ante-room, and introduced myself, somewhat unceremoniously, I acknowledge, to the jaded man of science. He was solacing himself with a glass of whisky and water for the exertion he had gone through; and it can have been no pleasure to him to see his leisure interrupted by yet another enthusiast.

"Sir," I said, with some little abruptness, "is it then true that you can liquefy memory?"

I afterwards found that the Professor was by no means noted for politeness or *bonhomie;* on the most ordinary occasions he had been known to adopt a tone of *brusquerie* and almost of brutality; but at the present moment I was willing to excuse and even to welcome any want of blandness in his manner.

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My object was to acquire information; I cared little for the style in which the information might be imparted.

"Have you not heard my lecture?" he said.

"I have," I replied.

"Then do you doubt my word?"

"Not in the least," I answered with a little embarrassment; "I was only anxious for a few more details and explanations on the subject."

"You complain that my lecture was not sufficiently lucid? Let me inform you that I have often had such complaints from the less intelligent members of my classes."

"I make no such complaint," I rejoined.

"Then why trouble me?" he said testily. "If the lecture was lucid, and you have listened to it, and you aren't absolutely unintelligent, there can be nothing for me to add. Unless, indeed, you are a professional interviewer—a class for which I entertain a contempt almost equal to its deserts."

"I am not an interviewer."

"Then for goodness sake tell me your business and be done." He glanced at the clock.

"In the first place," I replied, "I have come for information. In the second place, I am well to do, and able and willing to pay you for the information you have to bestow."

He seemed more interested, but of course it became him to simulate an indifference to gain.

"My discoveries are not for the common market," he replied loftily.

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"Of course not," said I; "otherwise you would have printed them in a cheap scientific journal, and not have charged a guinea a head this afternoon."

He relaxed into a half-smile.

"Proceed," he said.

"I pass no censure on the lucidity of your demonstrations: I am rather acknowledging my own want of intelligence when I say that I did not gather whether you liquefied memory as a faculty, or whether you only took certain remembered facts, and, subjecting them to intense cold, reduced them to a fluid and portable condition. If the former, I can see no practical advantage in your discovery, but rather a considerable danger; if the latter, I perceive many ways in which it may be useful."

"Science is not concerned with utility," observed the great man.

"Nevertheless," I said, "you cannot expect people to pay largely for a mere theoretical discovery."

"That is true," said the Professor.

"Many people," I went on, "who are by no means anxious to lose their memory entirely, nor even to see it in bottles on their shelves, will be glad to pay a fairly large sum in order to be able to forget certain transactions in their past history."

"You appear before me, then," he remarked sarcastically, "as a person with an awkward past, which you would be glad to get rid of?"

"That may or may not be the case," I replied. "For the sake of argument you are at liberty to assume it. The point, however, is, not whether I

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would like to forget these incidents, but whether you are able to make me forget them, while leaving the general faculty of reminiscence and retentiveness as sound as ever."

"Just so; and that is precisely what I *can* do. It was the very object of my lecture to prove it possible. Nay more; had you attended with ordinary care, you would have noticed that I referred to certain points of practical utility in my discovery. I said, if you remember, that the memory suffered, as a rule, by having too much to carry; it was—I spoke of course metaphorically—a kind of balloon which could not endure too great distention. By removing superfluous foreign matter, I said, I could make the memory more capable of duly assimilating the remainder. A business man, for example, is overloaded with the Latin he learnt at school. By my process I should compel him to forget the Latin, and thus ensure his mastery of the details of stocks and shares, on which at present he is unable to bestow undivided attention."

"That is precisely the point on which I wished to consult you. Speaking again metaphorically, the memory is a stomach, often suffering indigestion from over-pressure, which requires vigorous measures of relief. Conscience, for instance, is a dyspepsia of the reminiscent powers."

"Exactly. A man who repents is remembering too much, just as a man who is bilious has some foreign matter within him."

"Then," I went on, "to proceed to business. At

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what price, if I may put it so bluntly, are you prepared to relieve a man of the stray scraps of useless memory which cause so much avoidable distress? If he has been guilty of certain follies in the past, which it serves no purpose for him to remember, at what price will you take from him the recollection of these follies?"

"You are indeed putting it bluntly, Mr. —— I beg your pardon; I seem to have forgotten your name."

"Verity," I replied.

"Then, Mr. Verity," he answered, "is it necessary to remind you that the discoveries of science are not to be sold over the counter like so-and-so's potted meats?"

"Not so cheaply, of course," I observed. "But, as soon as I have made sure that the wares *are* yours, and are the identical pills which are admitted by thousands to be worth a guinea a box, I shall make no hesitation about paying the price."

"Well," he replied, "I confess I *have* thought about the fees I shall demand: and I have hit upon a scheme which I think you will admit is perfectly fair. I charge for oblivion the same price as is charged for acquisition. For example, a coach at Cambridge is paid nine guineas for driving into his pupil's head as much Greek as will get him through the Littlego. I shall charge the same sum, nine guineas, for removing from the memory the same amount of knowledge."

"Rather a heavy sum for so trifling a removal,"

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said I. "But now—may I assume that this conversation is in the strictest sense of the word confidential?"

"Most certainly, on the word of a professional man and a gentleman."

"Then I shall be willing to pay you a thousand pounds for the removal from my memory, the liquefaction, and the storing up in bottles, of certain specified facts which at present, to my sorrow, I am always remembering. *Nothing besides* is to be forgotten. For example, if I include Latin on my list, I do not wish to lose the English language with it. Nor is there to be any deception about it. The bottles are to be accurately labelled, with full instructions, so that, should I wish to remember again, I may be able to restore the memories to their gaseous condition."

"Precisely. Let me have the list, and all this shall be done."

"And, on the word of a gentleman, you swear not to use any of this knowledge for your own advantage?"

"On the word of a gentleman, I swear it."

"At what date can you finish your operations?"

"Exactly a fortnight after I receive your inventory."

"Shall you require any further interviews?"

"A single interview will be sufficient. I will run through your list of facts with you, cause them to disappear from your consciousness, and collect them for liquefaction. Then, within a fortnight, I will

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send them to you in a case, each bottle hermetically sealed, labelled, and numbered; the case also containing a numbered and indexed paper of full instructions."

"Very well. My list shall be ready to-day week. I will then call on you. Here is a cheque for a thousand pounds, post-dated a month from now. Is that satisfactory?"

"Perfectly."

I was about to withdraw, when a further question occurred to me.

"Of course," I remarked, "these stored-up memories are accessible to me alone?"

"If you keep the key," he replied.

"But supposing somebody else drank them by mistake?"

"You must on no account let that happen," he said with great earnestness.

"Why not?" said I. "Surely that person simply remembers my doings as his own?"

"Not at all. You must observe that these memories are concrete facts, not personal properties or faculties. Anybody who drinks your memory does not absorb it as his *memory*, but as a body of facts. He will know that *you* did the things."

"How?"

"He will think it intuition," said Magus. "Let me illustrate my point. I have, I may inform you in confidence, done a good trade in relieving lawyers, just raised to the bench, of a load of superfluous legal knowledge. Finding no longer any use for this

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erudition, they part with it to me for a consideration, and I sell it—at a small profit—to young men who wish to pass their examinations. So with Bishops and Theological Professors. Having attained a height at which knowledge is an absurd encumbrance, they pass it on to me, and I pass it on to students who require it."

"This accounts for a good deal," I remarked.

"It does. And you see that these students acquire the knowledge not as memory but as *facts*. Similarly, if your knowledge of your past is acquired by others, they learn facts about you which, if you possessed them, would present themselves as memory, but which, to the new possessor, are items of intuitive knowledge which give them a considerable power over you. Beware, therefore, of letting others so much as see your bottles. I should, in your case, take the precaution to label them 'poison.'"

"They are indeed pretty poisonous, especially for the young," I thought to myself.

I then bowed and withdrew, leaving the cheque with the avaricious Professor. Both of us were thoroughly pleased with the bargain: he at having my money, and I at the prospect of losing my past.

During the next week I confess that my pleasure did not increase. First of all, doubts of the Professor's *bona fides* would constantly intrude. What was to hinder him, for example, from removing from my memory all traces of a recollection that the cheque had been paid? Might he not delude me

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into paying it over and over again? This danger, however, I could easily meet by sending beforehand a note to the bank, forbidding the cashing of more than a single cheque to the Professor. But the second difficulty was far greater—that of deciding the precise items to be included in my act of oblivion. Even my most foolish actions, I found, contained *something* pleasant in the reminiscence, which I should be loth to lose entirely. Little as I had suspected it, there had been some pride mingled with the shame with which I regarded my early exploits. Just as the most objectionable man you know acquires endurable qualities on the eve of his departure from your company, so these painful memories, as their extinction drew nigh, became strangely pleasant. The circumstances of my expulsion from the University, for instance, circumstances reflecting very little credit on myself, assumed a romantic aspect as it became likely they would speedily vanish from my ken. Nevertheless, the list was at last drawn up, and a *précis* of the facts carefully committed to paper. I decided on the whole to eliminate from my life nearly all my first twenty-five years of existence. But the greatest folly of those years, my marriage, I was bound to retain; for I was conscious that, puzzling as it now was to me to guess why I had married my wife, it would be still more puzzling to account for her daily proximity should I cease to remember that I *had* married her. I therefore excluded from the list the fatal day on which she and I had become nominally one.

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On the appointed day, with inventory and *précis* all complete, I again presented myself before Magus. He was much more suave and polite than on the former occasion. I afterwards ascertained that he had been to the bank, and made sure that the name of Verity was good for many times the thousand pounds I had promised him.

"Punctual to the moment, Mr. Verity," he observed pleasantly.

"I am a man of business," I replied.

"Just so. To proceed to business, then. Have you your list of facts ready?"

"All tabulated and summarised," I answered.

"Very good. Now be kind enough to take that chair, and, with the help of your *précis*, as deliberately and connectedly as possible, to repeat all the facts you wish to be relieved of. They will be caught by that phonographic apparatus, then transformed into their constituent gases by electrolysis, and stored up ready for subsequent liquefaction. Be careful, however, to say *nothing* irrelevant while under the influences I shall bring to bear; otherwise you may find that you have forgotten more than you intended."

"I shall take good care of that," I said with a smile.

"Nevertheless, extreme care must be taken. Confine yourself as far as possible to your *précis;* the attempt to be too detailed may be fatal."

"Are you sure there is no one to hear?" I said. "Before I forget, I should like to remember the importance of solitude and secrecy."

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"No one," he rejoined. "Be good enough to trust me. Remember, I do not receive your cheque till you have had ample time to detect a fraud."

"Exactly," I said.

I took the chair indicated, and after a few adjustments of the machinery, Magus informed me that he was ready to begin. I started as follows:—

"Item first. At the University I was guilty of certain follies. I wasted my time and was ploughed in Smalls in consequence. Rendered reckless by my failure, I plunged into various excesses, several times being drunk, and once knocking down a Proctor, for which I was rusticated. On my return, after a year's absence, there was little improvement in my conduct. I became associated with a card-playing and drinking set, the result being that I lost large sums of money. I made several false representations to my father as to the cause of my debts; but at length, suspecting the nature of my embarrassments, he refused to disburse any further sums. Reduced to desperation, I was compelled to have recourse to certain devices for assisting fortune which are not usually practised by gentlemen. But I was a novice in these arts; and on the second occasion of my trying them I was detected by my companions. The affair somehow came to the ears of the dons, and I was ignominiously expelled." I paused.

"Very good," said Professor Magus. "Your first confession is complete."

As he spoke, I was conscious of a most delightful sensation, which I am at a loss how to describe. It

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was like the gradual disappearance of toothache under morphia, but far more delicious. I lay back in my chair in a kind of exquisite stupor, while a feeling of intense relief diffused itself through my veins. Never in my life had I felt so absolutely happy: never before had I realised so fully that a quiet conscience makes one serene. Oh Lethe, what a divine flood thou art! I was in a rapture of repose, like that we may imagine the life-weary to feel in the kindly lap of death. The voice of Magus aroused me.

"How do you feel?" he said.

"Divine!" I answered.

"Yet a man expelled from the University ought to feel occasional twinges of discomfort."

"Expelled!" I cried. "Expelled from the University! I do not recollect ever having been there!"

"Precisely," he said with a smirk of satisfaction. "Item Number One is finished. With your permission I will tear that portion off your paper and burn it."

He did so.

"Now for Number Two."

I shall not give the details of the remaining items. Suffice it to say that at the conclusion of each experiment I felt, if possible, more enraptured than after the first. Never was so blissful an hour vouchsafed to mortal as to me, when one by one the burdens of evil memories fell off my soul, and left me with the happy conscience of the sanctified. And, be it remembered, I was totally unconscious that my secret had passed into the breast of another. Magus

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made several remarks to the effect that I had committed foolish actions in the past, but I neither believed him nor resented his statements. I was capable only of perceiving that I owed him an immense debt of gratitude; as to its precise nature I was, by the very peculiarities of the process, totally in the dark. That I had given myself into his power never occurred to me, and, it is obvious, could not possibly do so.

I rose from my chair a new man.

"What you have done, Professor," I said, "I don't know; but I feel immensely relieved, as though you had removed from me a malignant growth."

"I have indeed done so," he answered with a smile.

"I suppose that I shall be visited no more by the distressing symptoms—I cannot quite remember what they were—which used to trouble me?"

"Never again, if you follow my directions."

"I am, then, completely cured?"

"Completely."

"Then, Professor, accept my profoundest thanks. At the present moment I do indeed feel as if I had awaked from a horrible nightmare; I can just remember that it *was* horrible, but its details have vanished."

"Not entirely," he said, with a dubious smile. "They are to be sent back to you, you remember, bottled for future use if required."

"Ah yes; in a fortnight."

"They shall arrive."

I rose to depart. A sudden thought stopped me.

"I have been unconscious," I remarked. "Have

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I made any strange confessions during my unconsciousness?"

"Strange and indeed absurd things are often said in delirium," replied Magus. "We doctors learn to pay to them no attention whatever. Besides," he added oracularly, in words I could not in the least understand, "a man who learns the secret of another has no power over him unless *both* know the secret."

He held out his hand with a rather overdone show of effusiveness.

During the next few months the even tenour of my way was such as to provide scanty material for history. My brain was clear, my conscience clean, my business prosperous. In a week, through the absence of distraction, I was able to carry through processes of calculation so delicate and so far-reaching as to bring me several thousand pounds. Magus' honorarium was a mere drop in the bucket of my wealth. The days glided on in absolute calm; I lived like a saint absorbed in the holy routine of his monastery—but the comparison fails in one respect. Unlike the saint, I had a wife; and, indeed, in the midst of the most exquisite happiness, I was unlikely to forget that fact. She had the bad taste to be an invalid, and, still worse, to be religious. Added to this, she was keen-witted, and knew considerably more about my business-transactions than I liked. It was rarely that she expressed approval of my methods, and still more rarely that she showed any appreciation of the comforts with which my exertions surrounded her. It was hard for me, after

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days or weeks of toil, ending in a triumphant success, to listen to her sharp criticisms on what she was pleased to term the immoral character of my proceedings. It was in vain that I told her that she did not understand business; she answered that she understood quite enough to wish to understand no more. She was also tainted with the heresies of philanthropy. For political economy, as I expounded it, she expressed contempt; and often I detected her in the very act of almsgiving—a system by which the idle poor are made to benefit by the exertions of the rich, whereas the laws of nature declare that the rich should benefit by the exertions of the poor.

I was never quite sure whether the perspicacity of my wife had not put her in possession of the facts in my past history of which I have spoken above. She never alluded to her knowledge of any such facts; and yet I had often, from her manner, an uneasy suspicion that she had guessed a good deal. It was indeed this suspicion which had in the first instance led me to Professor Magus; for, curiously enough, I had a great awe of my wife, and would rather have had the whole world beside know of my delinquencies than her. If, however, I could absolutely forget about them, I should be able with a free conscience to deny them, should she ever take to catechising me; and I therefore welcomed the chance of relieving my memory of its incubus. I have never been able to understand *why* I should have stood in such awe of a frail and innocent woman. But so it was: like the Duke of

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Marlborough, and other great men, I, though indifferent to most other terrors, was in servile fear of my wife.

I have said that she was an invalid. She suffered, in fact, from neuralgia. The paroxysms were frequently very intense; so much so, indeed, as often to make me wonder whether their very violence might not prove fatal: a consummation to which I looked forward with equanimity, for even Professor Magus' apparatus could not have relieved me from a greater burden than the daily sermon of my wife's face. But neuralgia, though painful, is not immediately dangerous to life; and Mrs. Verity lived on.

About a year after my interview with Magus, one of her bad times came again. It was both fiercer and longer than usual. One of my maxims is to trouble myself as little as possible about the sufferings of others; but it taxed my philosophy, I confess, to watch unmoved my wife's agony. Still, I was annoyed that she kept me awake; and I pointed out to her that it was impossible to see how pain could be relieved by uneasy motions to and fro. To this she made no reply, and remained perfectly still for a few minutes. At length, however, she moved again, and begged me, if it would not be too great trouble, to fetch her a mixture which had sometimes relieved her in the past.

I grumbled considerably; but, reflecting that if relieved she would probably annoy me less, I got out of bed and hurried downstairs, to a room where I kept a little store of materia medica, including,

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alas! my liquefied reminiscences. The night was cold, and I was in a hurry to be back; accordingly I did not light the gas, but found my way in the dark to the shelf on which, as I supposed, the healing mixture was to be found. Having seized it, I hastened upstairs, and, with a fatuity for which I found it hard to account, handed it to my wife, leaving her to pour it out and drink it.

The effect was instantaneous. She fell back at once into a peaceful slumber, causing me no disturbance for the rest of the night, and woke refreshed and free from physical pain. But I was conscious of a look on her face which I had never seen before—a look which I find it hard to describe, except perhaps as one of suspicion justified. She appeared to be saying to herself,

"I thought as much."

For some time, however, absorbed in business interests, I paid little attention to it; and it was not till a week had passed that anything happened to prove that my vague uneasiness had a definite ground. At last the fatal hour arrived. I had reached home one afternoon earlier than usual wearied but triumphant, having carried one more of my financial transactions to a successful conclusion. My wife kindly gave me some tea, and handed me a box of cigars. When I was enjoying the weed, she drew her chair opposite to mine, so as to have her back to the window, while my face was in the light.

Her scrutiny of my features did not seem to reassure her, in spite of the fact that I was quite

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oblivious of anything in my past to which she could take exception, and that therefore my face wore an innocent expression which might not have misbecome a new-born child. Whether, in defiance of all the laws of physiognomical analysis, she detected something in my countenance betokening guilt, I cannot say; her subtlety in intuitions of this kind was marvellous; but it was not long before she spoke.

"Walter," she said, "you are not very communicative as to your past."

"I remember very little of it," I replied, with absolute truthfulness.

"Were you ever at the University?"

"Never," I replied. "I have a sort of idea that in a previous state of existence I was there; but certainly not in this incarnation."

"You are not telling the truth," she said deliberately.

I ought to have resented this insult; but somehow I did not. Perhaps it was that even yet I retained in my memory some lies which I had told her and which she had detected. In any case, I answered meekly enough,

"Why do you disbelieve me?"

"I cannot tell you why. Yet I am as certain as I am of my own existence that you were once at Oxford. I suspected this before; but for the last week I have been sure of it. It has been borne in on me, as though by a voice from Heaven."

"A nice sort of thing to accept vague imaginations like this against your husband's word."

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"That is just the point; it is no vague imagination, but exceedingly precise and definite. Let me tell you what I seemed to hear that evening when I was ill, and when you brought me my mixture. It was like a voice from without, and yet it appeared to pervade me from within. It said that at the University you wasted your time and were ploughed in Smalls—whatever that may mean. Rendered reckless by your failure, you plunged into various excesses, several times being drunk, and once knocking down a Proctor. I am sure that was the word, though I do not know what kind of official is so called. For this you were rusticated—again some term denoting extreme disgrace. On your return, after a year's absence, there was little improvement in your conduct. You became associated with a card-playing and drinking set, the result being that you lost large sums of money. You made several false representations to your father as to the cause of your debts; but at length, suspecting the nature of your embarrassments, he refused to disburse any further sums. Let me see—can I recollect what the Voice said besides? Yes—it said that, reduced to desperation, you were compelled to have recourse to certain devices for assisting fortune which are not commonly practised by gentlemen. In a word, I suppose, you cheated. But, the Voice proceeded, you were a novice in these arts; and, on the second occasion of your trying them, you were detected by your companions. The affair somehow came to the ears of the dons—the college authorities, I suppose—and you were ignominiously expelled."

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She spoke as if she were repeating a lesson learnt by rote. As to the genuineness of the vision or voice there could be no question. I was at a loss to account for this strange phenomenon. I ransacked my memory for some explanation, but could find none. I had never had these adventures; I had never played cards; I had never even been to the University. Whence then did my wife learn these precise and apparently historical details?

Suddenly the explanation struck me. Magus, in removing from me the memory of my old delinquencies, had not removed from me the memory that it *had* been removed. I was still left fully conscious that a change had taken place in my mental realm; and I was fairly well assured that there was *something* which had existed, though I did not know what, and which I could restore, if I chose, by following Magus' instructions. Now could what my wife knew be part of these destroyed recollections of mine? The probability seemed considerable. But if so, how had she attained the knowledge? Obviously—the thought came to me in a flash—by drinking from the bottle of liquefied memory. And when? Oh fool! I recalled it all: I had given her one of these fatal bottles to cure her neuralgia. She had drained it, and had thus become possessed of all the information which I had so earnestly striven to keep from her! Nay, worse: for she *alone* possessed it: I did not. She had, in the coming battle, all the advantage of knowing, while I had all the dangers of ignorance. It was true that she was

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ignorant of my ignorance; but this was a mere trifle. I must put myself on a level with her by re-learning those hateful facts which I had so carefully excised from my system. I had never expected that I should be compelled to follow Magus' prescription; that chapter in my life I had believed closed for ever; yet here, within a few months, a dire necessity was constraining me to re-assume a knowledge whose uselessness none knew better than I; for had I not lived comfortably, nay blissfully, without it for months?

I rushed upstairs to the bedroom and found my worst suspicions confirmed. There was the fatal bottle; obviously, in my insane stupidity and carelessness, I really had given it to my wife on that ill-omened night. Was it empty? Thank heaven, no! Some of the blessed fluid still remained; and I knew that its pervasive virtue could restore to me the memory so foolishly transmitted to another. Not staying to think, I drained the bottle at a gulp. Strange to say, the sensations were at first pleasant. A beautiful dreaminess diffused itself over my frame, and I felt no inclination to resist it. I lay down on the sofa and awaited calmly the approach of sleep, which was not long in coming. In the last moments before I went off into unconsciousness, I seemed to behold, as in a glass darkly, my wife enter the room, take a chair by my couch, and fix a scrutinising gaze upon my face.

I slept till morning, and woke feeling like Samson when he had lost his hair. Innocence had departed,

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and with the innocence the strength so closely allied to it. For a few minutes this feeling was purely general; but after a time my memory fastened itself upon details which justified my despondency. There it was once more—the old gnawing of remorse, like that which frets a murderer years after his victim has been buried.

Peace was to be mine no more. It was true, then, that which I had so confidently denied: I had indeed, though under another name, disgraced myself and my family, and been expelled from the University with every mark of shame. And my wife, having acquired the information in the same way as that in which I had renewed it, stood there as my outward conscience, watching with a kind of saintly interest the accumulation on my features of the fatal evidences of guilt! I could not face her eyes, and turned away to escape their penetration; but I could not escape my own remorse, which, as if refreshed by its long repose, seemed to be keener than ever it had been before.

Yet, amid it all, I felt the satisfaction of knowing that my wife stood on no vantage ground in her relation to me. Everything that she knew I knew; and my knowledge, though unpleasant, was so much power. I perceived the reason why Adam was resolved to follow Eve's example, and to eat the fruit which he knew to be deadly. Eve should know nothing, however disadvantageous the knowledge might be, with which he was unacquainted. The folly of wisdom, in such circumstances, is better than

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the stolid bliss of ignorance. Strange then as it may seem, I did not regret my vanished innocence. It is something to be complete master of one's personality.

"So then," said my wife, "you admit the truth of all I said yesterday?"

"I do," I replied. "As usual, you were right, my dear."

"Then you confess that you told me a lie about it?"

"No, my dear. When you asked me those questions, I told you what I believed to be the truth. I was suffering under a suspension of the reminiscent faculties."

"Very curious," she answered.

"Curious, but true."

"Still more curious, *if* true," she observed.

I thought frankness my best course.

"It *is* true," I said. "How did *you* acquire the knowledge?"

"I cannot say; it seemed to become part and parcel of myself."

"You didn't know it a fortnight ago?"

"No; though I suspected a good deal."

"Then, my dear, let me tell you that I have acquired the knowledge in precisely the same way as you. It was borne in on me, as you phrase it. And my ignorance, which seemed so strange to you yesterday, was due to exactly the same causes as yours."

"You speak in riddles," she said.

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"I will make it plain," I answered. "You know that Professor Magus is capable of removing from the consciousness isolated facts of memory, and even of reducing them to a liquid state."

"I had heard of this pretended power of his," said she.

"It is a genuine power," I rejoined. "In any case, I know he has succeeded in doing so with me. For example, he removed from my mind all traces of recollection of that discreditable episode in my past life which led to my departure from the University. These recollections, greatly reduced in bulk by being transformed from the mental to the material state, he bottled up for future use or destruction. Unfortunately I did not destroy them; and thus it was that, by a deplorable accident, you, when you fancied you were taking a soothing draught, were really absorbing into your system a set of recollections to which you could lay no claim. You have, in fact, remembered what *I* did. Curious, is it not—a wife becoming not only one flesh but one mind with her husband?"

"Not curious, but horrible. Oh, Walter, don't you see how you are tampering with the gifts of God?"

"How so? I confess I do not understand you."

"By trifling with your power of repentance. All things shall be forgiven to man if he repents; but you have destroyed in yourself, by your own act, the very faculty of contrition. Oh, it is horrible! There is no chance of reformation; you have done that which by its very nature ruins your hope of forgiveness!"

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"Do not be so excited, my dear," I said in the first tone of soothing I had used for years. "I assure you it is very comfortable not to remember the evil one has done. No one knows this better than I. For months I was in that blessed state of forgetfulness; but now, alas! I remember certain facts only too well."

"What, have you drunk the stuff back again?"

"Not all of it; only one of the bottles—that one, in fact, which contained those unpleasant memories you dislike so much. You see, a husband and a wife ought to have no secrets from each other; he ought to know hers, and she his. Still more ought he to share any of *his* secrets which she has got possession of. Thinking thus, I resolved to put myself on a level with you, and drank the fatal bottle last night."

"Oh, Walter, drink the others! Do not, do not deprive yourself for ever of the power of repenting *any* sin, however tiny! And some are not small, I am sure, or you would not have tried to lose them!"

"You are unreasonable, Mary."

"Unreasonable, yes; but faithful. Oh, for heaven's sake, by the happy hour we once had, do not, do not deny me this!"

"Why, Mary, I had no notion you had such an affection for me," I observed with a touch of sarcasm.

"No, I do not love you—and who is to blame for that? But I would not have you kill your soul."

"Don't you see that if I get rid of my evil past I am the more likely to be able to live better in the future?"

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"Yes, if you lose it in the appointed way. But this is awful—this is devilish. Who is Professor Magus? Are the old stories true, and do evil spirits still walk the earth, permitted for a season to work signs and wonders?"

"Nonsense," I cried; "Magus is human enough. He is covetous, at any rate; and no devil would have been so anxious as he to relieve me of the root of all evil. He rooked me a thousand pounds!"

"Do not jest, Walter," she cried. "Man or fiend, Professor Magus has done the devil's work. But be brave, and resist him. Better remember all you have done, and let remorse kill you, than live in this state of conscienceless, and soulless, and ruinous indifference."

"You bore me," I replied. "What is conscience but the memory of something that had better be forgotten? 'Who would fardels bear,' as Shakespeare says?"

"The dread of something after," she added.

"Yes, that is awkward," I answered. "I wish I had remembered to ask Magus to remove painful anticipations as well as painful reminiscences. Still, I confess it is awkward."

"Then obey me this once—just this once. Oh," she cried, "can nothing move you?" In her frenzy she forgot herself so far as to use the gestures only appropriate to affection. She seemed to imagine that we were still on our honeymoon, and kissed me with all the *abandon* of sweet and twenty. I endured this infliction with philosophy.

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"Well, Mary," I said at last, "I will think about it."

Like Samson, I had made the first false step: a woman asks no more. And indeed it is not only the Delilahs that can seduce, and flatter, and betray. The good women, when they choose, can ply the arts of blandishment with a skill which would put the Viviens to shame. But this recollection, like most of my recollections, is painful to me. I will not dwell upon the gradual process of my decline and fall. Suffice it to say that after days of labour, my unfortunate wife gained her end. I drank the cup of knowledge, and resumed the personality that I had hoped was left behind for ever. All those crowding memories, some too unpleasant to be recorded here, of sordid tricks for making gain, of the "fraus innexa clienti," of the ready lie and glib half-truth, rose from their long slumber and resumed, like mosquitoes in spring, their irritating and persistent attacks upon my peace. Sleep—the sleep of unremorseful infancy, as I had enjoyed it of late, should never more be mine. Yet, if remorse was active, there was no repentance. It was my revenge upon my wife to tell her of my misdeeds, and to laugh at contrition.

"You made me recollect them," I would say; "well, let me regale you with them!"

And this I would proceed to do by the hour; till the poor woman had no resource but to retire to her room to pray.

But this revenge, though sweet, was not lasting; and it was terminated in a very remarkable way. I

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have indicated already that my face, after the drinking of the bottles, was as a book to reveal the secrets of my mind. To a very ordinary physiognomist it can have been no hard matter to detect from my looks that I was no saint. It will, therefore, be no surprise to the reader that the keen-sighted Magus was soon aware of the increase of my mental equipment. It is true that I endeavoured to avoid him, and that on the occasions when I was compelled to accost him I scrupulously abstained from looking him straight in the face; but the Professor was not to be deceived. He dropped several hints as to the deterioration in my appearance, and was not to be put off by my assertions that I was as well as ever.

"Nonsense, my good fellow," he would say, "you are either run down physically, or have received some bad news. You want a thorough change."

"I have had changes enough," I answered.

"Precisely; you want a change *from* change. "A little monotony would make a new man of you."

"It is true I should like to be made a new man of," I replied.

"The old one is again troubling you," he remarked, and turned away.

A few weeks later he met me again. I tried once more to shun him; but he was one of those objectionable friends who stick closer than a brother.

"Look here, Verity," he said, "you are ill, and you know it. Do not deny it; your face bewrayeth you."

"I have told you often, Magus, that I am *not* ill. Why will you pester me?"

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"I take a great interest in you," he replied. "You are one of my most remarkable cases, you know."

"To my sorrow," I retorted.

"Just so. Now it is impossible for me to forget a case."

"No; though you make your cases forget."

"But their forgetfulness doesn't last for ever."

"Are you one of those quacks who can only afford temporary cures?"

"The duration of the cure depends on the patient. Now in your case I should imagine that the relief has been only temporary."

"Why so?"

"Because, Verity, of the evidence supplied by your face, not only in its usual expression, but at this very moment. In a word, you are blushing."

"And supposing the cure *has* failed, what business, pray, is it of yours?"

"It is very much my business, Mr. Verity. Business means a method of making money. Now I see a very easy way of making money out of this affair. You do not forget that I am in possession of some very sordid secrets of yours?"

"No, I don't," I said sullenly.

"Just so; now do you also remember a little remark I made to the effect that a man who learns the secret of another has no power over him unless *both* know the secret?"

"I recall an observation of the kind," I replied.

"Very well. It is indeed a truism. If I know that you have, for example, been guilty of forgery, while

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you are entirely ignorant of the fact, my knowledge is useless to me as a means of reducing you to subjection. Were I to attempt anything of the sort, you would—assuming your ignorance—naturally defy me to do my worst. But as soon as you know it, you are absolutely in my power. *Now* do you understand?"

"I understand clearly that you are a damned blackmailer."

"Precisely. Call me what you like. Hard words break no bones. But, you see, anyhow, both why I have abstained from troubling you during the past few months, and why now I venture to remind you that you are in a position of complete dependence upon my mercy."

"How much do you want?" I said savagely. "Stop this damned palaver, and name your price. Put it as high as you like. Any sum is worth paying to be rid of such an infernal devil as you."

He smiled.

"I am impervious to abuse," he remarked. "And to show my generosity, let me say that I shall be quite content with a thousand pounds."

"A thousand devils!" I cried.

"Forgery—" he whispered.

"Damn you!" I muttered. "Well, bring me a pen and ink." I drew out my cheque-book, and signed my name for the sum required.

He took it with an evil grin, and rose to his feet.

"I will trouble you to stay here till I have taken my cab to the bank," he said.

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"Go to hell, if you like!" I cried.

"It is difficult to prevent your accompanying me *there*," he remarked suavely; "but kindly leave me to myself *for the present*."

With this veiled promise of future attentions he went downstairs, hailed a hansom, and was off to the city. I watched him with sullen despair. I knew well that bloodsuckers of his type do not content themselves with one feast. I was to be slowly, artistically, but remorselessly drained dry. I sat brooding over my approaching ruin till the evening shadows reminded me it was time to go home.

Magus has been again, and has demanded another thousand pounds. The man has the memory of a Macaulay. Every detail, every date, is at his fingers' ends. Besides, he has seen that one of my weaknesses is my dread of my wife. His diabolical grin gets on my nerves, and rasps me into madness. But for certain hints he drops as to directions he has left about compromising papers, I would shoot him like a dog. But his infernal cunning has prevented all such methods of riddance. I must fly.

Next morning Mr. Verity went down to the bank, and took out gold, notes, and bonds to the amount of thirty thousand pounds. All the rest of his immense property he had to leave. Having secured this sum about his person, he hailed a cab and drove to Victoria Station, where he took ticket for Paris, evidently intending to disappear from view for ever.

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Unfortunately, the Professor had succeeded in tracking him—unfortunately, that is, for both. It appears that the Professor, disguised as a commercial traveller, contrived to take his seat in the same carriage as his victim. Here, shortly after the train started, he would seem to have thrown off his disguise, and disclosed to the unhappy Mr. Verity his resolve to pursue him, if necessary, to the ends of the earth. The sight of his enemy, and the conviction of his inability to shake him off, roused Mr. Verity to madness. He flung himself on the Professor, raging like a wild beast, and endeavoured literally to tear him to pieces. The noise of the struggle was heard through the open windows of the carriage, and the train was speedily brought to a standstill; but too late to save the life of the one combatant or the reason of the other. The Professor was torn, a mangled and blood-stained corpse, from the hands of his murderer, who was at length secured, foaming and inarticulate with fury. He was conveyed to prison, and shortly afterwards tried for his life. No motive for his attack being known or conceivable, his advocate had little difficulty in persuading the jury that insanity alone could account for his actions. Accordingly, he was in due course sentenced to detention in Broadmoor during Her Majesty's pleasure. There he has occupied himself with imaginary speculations on the Bourse or on the Stock Exchange, and with compiling the extraordinary narrative reproduced above.

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VIII.

UP A TREE.

"I've found it out," cried my chum Hopkins, bursting into my study one afternoon.

"Found out what, you ass?" I asked, gazing ruefully at a huge blot he had made on an impot I was writing for cheeking Fatty Taylor, organist and fourth-form master.

"Why, found out all about Thompson," he said, dabbing at the blot with his handkerchief, and making it worse.

"Thompson is a beast," I replied. (Thompson was a prefect.)

"So he is; but it's a case of 'Beauty and the Beast' now."

"What do you mean?"

"He's in love."

"Rot. Who'd fall in love with such a cad as he is?" I cried.

"Well, anyhow I caught sight of a letter he was writing in his study, and what do you think it had on? 'My darling Maisie!'"

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I was roused now. Maisie was the Head's daughter, and Hoppy and I *had* been wondering why Thompson had been such a duke in his dress lately, and why he was always stinking the dormitory out with scents and flowers. I could put two and two together; but I knew Hoppy well.

"Hop, you're rotting."

"Honour bright, no. True as gospel. You know that impot he gave me, five hundred lines for calling him a beastly old bounder?"

"I ought to, as I wrote it," I answered.

"Well, you *did* get the stamps for it," he replied. "Anyhow, you did my scrawl very well. I took it into his study just now, and caught him writing. He was in a beastly hurry to turn over the sheet—scented paper, too!—but I spotted it. He seemed very uncomfortable, and wanted to haggle over the lines, saying they looked like double pen——"

"I had thought better of Maisie," I interrupted pensively.

"So had I," he said, with a tear in his voice. "You know I *had* fancied——"

"So had I," I put in sadly. "But she can't be much of a girl if she'll take up with a chap like Thompson."

"When she might have done so much better."

"When she *had* done so much better. I shan't cry over her."

"No; but I should like to have my revenge on Thompson, all the same."

"Easy to do. Report him to the Head. Fancy,

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a prefect deposed for making love to a Head Master's daughter!"

"Can't do that, Sloppy"—that was my nickname, preferred on grounds of euphony to my family designation of Montagu. "It would get *her* into a row. Besides, she might let on that Thompson wasn't the only one."

"You're right," I observed reflectively. "Though of course Maisie *does* deserve a little. Anyhow, Thompson does. I wish I could think of a way of getting in on him. Ah! I have it!"

"What is it, old man?" said Hoppy, as he saw the inspiration in my face.

"Why, you know I can imitate handwriting."

"Tolerably."

"Well enough for Thompson, anyhow."

"He *is* rather blind."

"Well, I'll write a letter from Maisie to him, and have him on no end."

"Rip!" cried Hoppy; "and how will you get it to him? Does *he* use the old tree in the garden, as —as—"

He hesitated.

"As *you* did, you mean," I said cruelly.

"We won't trust to that. We'll stick it in the keys of the organ. You know he plays at prayers whenever old Taylor is away."

"Good idea; but what shall we say? Shall we make her chuck him over?"

"No. We'll tell him to meet her at the Willows at two o'clock, like that Johnny in the play we did

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last term. He'll turn up dressed to the nines, and we'll be there watching him. By Jingo, what a tan he'll be in when he sees she isn't coming!"

"And how we can have him on in the dormitory!" cried Hoppy. "What were you doing down at the river, Thompson? You were looking for somebody," and Hoppy danced with anticipated triumph.

"Well," I said, "we may as well get it done. Dash old Taylor!" and I flung the Georgics, four hundred lines of which I was expected to copy, to the other end of the room. "Have you any of Maisie's letters?"

Hoppy hesitated.

"Haven't *you* any?" he asked.

"Burnt long ago," I answered. "Out with them: it's no good pretending you haven't kept them."

Still he hesitated.

"They're—they're——"

"Affectionate," I said. "Never mind; so were mine. It will help you to root out a degrading passion," I went on.

Modesty and pride struggled with the love of revenge; but at last the latter conquered. From his breast-pocket he extracted a little bundle, lovingly tied in silk. I seized the packet, picked out a letter at haphazard, and generously flung him back the rest. I read the dainty missive with some contempt, not unmingled with jealousy. The phraseology was thoroughly familiar. I recognised the very terms that had so often moved me to paroxysms of emotion in the past.

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"Maisie's a hot 'un," I remarked.

Hoppy became angry.

"Drop that," he cried. "I shan't go on with this. I wish I hadn't let you see it."

"Don't get squiffy," I replied. "She's susceptible, I mean. I've no doubt she's written like this to twenty chaps."

He grew still more restive.

"Let's chuck it up," he pleaded. "It's jolly poor fun after all."

"Not a bit of it," I cried. "We're testing her. She may still be true, and be only having Thompson on. If so, she'll be glad to hear how we've fooled him."

After long persuasion I made Hoppy promise to assist in the business. Using the ill-fated *billet-doux* as a model, I proceeded to concoct a note in Maisie's hand which might draw Thompson. The first attempts were failures; but after five or six shots the thing was done. When Hoppy saw the result, his ill-humour vanished, and he became positively radiant.

"Why, Slops," he cried, "this would take in Maisie herself. There it is, underlined and all."

He read it out.

"'Darling George, thank you *so much* for your *sweet* letter. How *good* of you to write so soon. Meet me by the Willows at two o'clock this afternoon, and we will have *such* a nice talk. Mother is calling, and I must stop. * * * Your loving MAISIE.'

"If he spots that, he's cuter than I think him."

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"Stick it into the keys of the organ just before prayers to-morrow," I enjoined; "and we'll have a good time."

"Isn't old Taylor playing then?"

"No; he told me he was off to Polkington for the night. Blow it, I shan't get his old impot done."

"Why trouble, then?" said Hoppy. "What's worth doing at all is worth doing well. Since you can't finish the impot chuck it altogether. Come out for a bike-ride."

Next morning Hoppy stealthily inserted the missive between two keys of the organ, so that the player must inevitably notice it, and then, trembling with excitement, came and sat by my side to watch developments.

"You fool!" he said, in a horrified whisper, "there's old Taylor going up to play!"

I looked. There was no doubt about it.

"The old liar!" I said. "He told me himself he was going to Polkington."

"He's here, anyhow," said Hoppy. "A pretty mess you've made of it."

"He may not notice it," I whispered forlornly. "And, if he does, it's Thompson that'll get into the row, not us."

The service went comfortably on till the hymn began, when there was a sudden stoppage which made it clear to us that Mr. Taylor must have found an obstruction. Nothing further happened. After breakfast, Mr. Taylor asked me for my impot, and on my confessing it was not done, increased it to six

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hundred lines. I was in no happy frame of mind during the morning. The anticipated joke was ruined, and I had several hours' work in the afternoon for my pains. It was true that Thompson was probably in for it; but I should not be there to see his humiliation. Life was insipid, nay, beastly.

During dinner I was *distrait*. So absorbed was I that I did not notice that Thompson was the organist at the little grace that followed. As the choir filed out, however, Hopkins nudged me furiously.

"Look at Thompson," he whispered.

I looked, and saw clearly that something was up. Thompson was blushing like a peony. He walked unsteadily, and in his hand he was clutching a piece of paper.

"Hops," I said, "Taylor is an honourable man. He saw the letter wasn't meant for him, and he wouldn't open it."

"We're in luck's way," he answered.

"Impot or no impot," I protested, "I'm going down to the Willows this afternoon. Old Taylor can make it a thousand to-morrow if he likes."

"I'm your man," he answered.

In ten minutes, eager and panting, we were by the river-bank.

"Where shall we hide?" asked Hoppy, looking round for a suitable lurking-place.

"Behind the Doddered Oak," I said, pointing to an old tree whose branches came pretty near the ground, and whose huge, half-hollowed trunk would enable us to see everything without being seen.

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Behind the Doddered Oak, accordingly, we hid, and waited for Thompson to turn up. Nor were we disappointed. Hardly had the school clock struck two when he appeared, dressed to perfection, with a lovely shiny top-hat on his head, an exquisite malacca cane in his hand, and a flower in his button-hole. His left hand, encased in a lavender kid glove, held the right glove with studied negligence.

"He is a verray perfit gentil knighte," whispered Hoppy.

"Hush," I whispered, as the enamoured swain passed so close to us that we could detect the well-known scent of his elegant handkerchief. His face was red with hurry and excitement.

At first he walked rapidly up and down, obviously expecting somebody. For the first few minutes his face, when we saw it, expressed the very slightest annoyance, but no surprise. He was plainly making allowance for feminine unpunctuality. After a short time, however, he showed impatience, and took from his breast-pocket a piece of paper, which he read intently. No; his face said it was all right: two o'clock was the time fixed. Accordingly, as if relieved, he resumed his walk, which grew every moment more hurried and feverish. At each view of his face, Hoppy was inclined to laugh outright; it was all I could do to restrain him. By dint of repeated injunctions I kept him quiet.

Every half-minute the lover would look at his watch, and every time Hoppy nearly burst with laughter. Then he inspected the letter again, his

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face wearing a most comic expression of mingled anger and bewilderment. At last, weary of his incessant perambulations, he sat down helplessly, kicking his heels, and poking furiously at the ground with his cane, muttering objurgations which would certainly have given the Head, had he heard them, occasion to revise his opinion of him. At every word, Hoppy and I stuffed our handkerchiefs into our mouths; for his alternate hopeful glances when he heard a cow grazing, and despair when he saw that the sound did not come from Maisie's fairy feet, would have made a cat laugh.

For an hour and a half the scene lasted—long enough, indeed, for us to lose some of our zest. Hoppy was just proposing that we should rush out and confront Thompson with the evidences of our presence, when our victim, suddenly rising, savagely tore the letter into a thousand fragments, which he flung into the river. The pangs of despised love were too much for prudence; and, like a veritable hero of tragedy, he burst out into a loud denunciation of female coquetry.

"Well, I'd never have thought she'd have been such a sneak! I'm hanged if I'll ever speak to her again!"

Then, having disburdened his button-hole of the flower it bore, he pulled off his glove, turned, and stalked homewards. Hardly was he out of earshot, when Hoppy and I, allowing our pent-up feelings full play, rolled on the ground, fairly shrieking with laughter.

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"Oh, Sloppy!" cried my friend, "did you ever see anything like it? Got up regardless! Buttonhole! orchid! and all for nothing! Let him try to give me a impot in the dormitory again, that's all."

"We have him well in tow for the rest of the term," I answered. "But what's that?"

For a strange sound interrupted our hilarity. We were not alone. Both of us started to our feet, and peered round anxiously. Was it possible that Maisie had arrived after all? No; there was silence—then suddenly again the sound of suppressed gurgling. Somebody was really near us, and laughing. My eyes strayed upwards. Hoppy's followed them; and all was explained. Above us, in the solid branches of the Doddered Oak, was the almost equally solid form of Mr. Taylor, with his handkerchief in his mouth, trying vainly to stifle his invincible laughter.

Seeing this, fate was too much for us. Prudence would have counselled flight; but we rolled over in frantic cachinnation, which grew deeper and more uncontrollable as we recognised that Mr. Taylor, hoping to play the spy, had come in for more than he bargained for.

"Don't go," said the fat master, at last, from his uneasy perch in the tree. "Just help me down, will you? Ascent is easy—this isn't like Avernus, my friends. Descent is the thing; *hoc opus, hic labor est.*"

We helped him down; and then, as a good master should, he proceeded to improve the occasion with some words of paternal counsel.

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"So Maisie never wrote the letter after all," he said. "I thought she was a good girl."

"I hope you're not disappointed, sir," I replied. "We really never thought that you might wish to see the show."

"Not in the least, my boy. At the same time"—here he pulled himself together, "it is wrong in boys to lead masters, even accidentally, to put themselves in compromising positions. Now you must never do this sort of thing again. In the first place, you must remember that I am fond of climbing trees. I often do it. You understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"In the second place, you two boys are fond of resting at the foot of trees. You often do it."

"Yes, sir."

"In the third place, Thompson is fond of walking up and down by the side of the river. He often does it."

"Yes, sir."

"Lastly, it would be unbecoming that the small boys of the school should know that I climb trees, or that you rest beneath them, or that Thompson likes to wander up and down by the river-bank. The dignity of the masters, of the prefects, and of study-boys, must be maintained. You understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well, then; under these circumstances I will pass over your very reprehensible conduct—and to spy on a prefect is *very* reprehensible—for this once."

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"Yes, sir. But please, sir, considering that we have helped you down from the tree——"

"And never asked your reason for being there, sir," put in Hoppy.

"Considering this, sir, what about the six hundred lines of the Georgics?"

"Ah," said Mr. Taylor, reflectively.

"Well, sir, if I wrote those lines, and the Georgics are all about trees, I might learn that oaks bear very funny fruit sometimes."

"Just so. Well, Montagu, I think I will take that imposition as written. Besides, you might get Maisie to write it, you know: she seems able to imitate your hand; and that would never do."

And that was the reason why we never told Thompson what a rise we had taken out of him.

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IX.

A FEAST OF REASON.

"THE soul has no existence apart from the body," said the Philosopher.

"It is a hard question," admitted the Bishop, who was generally tolerant after dinner; "nevertheless, you will allow that others have held a different opinion."

"Who ever saw a soul?" asked the Philosopher.

"A bishop exists apart from his robes," urged the Squire; "though I confess I never saw one in that condition."

"The analogy doesn't hold," said the Philosopher. "You can trace the Bishop by the platitudes he drops. Now you ought to be able to trace a soul by its effects. What effect *has* a soul apart from the body? What does it *do?* What does it *say?*"

"It says little, but probably thinks the more," observed the University Professor.

"It is very lonely, I should think," said the Undergraduate. "I roamed through an avenue of cypress *without* Psyche, my soul."

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"It doesn't exist at all," maintained the obstinate Philosopher. "Soul and body are one."

"As man and wife are one," remarked the Bishop. "The Church has unified them, yet they have a separate existence, and when one dies the other may live."

"As voice and tune are one, rather," said the Philosopher. "Destroy the voice, and where is the tune?"

"Alas!" murmured the Musician: "you can destroy the voice, but the tune lives on a thousand barrel-organs. Your analogy is unfortunate, Philosopher."

"Well," said the latter, "the question can never be settled except——"

"By assertions, equally vigorous and equally unproved on both sides," interrupted the Professor. "Except by the ordinary methods of proof. For example, by the method of Concomitant Variations."

"Of what?" cried the Undergraduate.

"We used to read Mill at the University in my time," remarked the Philosopher. "But I can explain it. Vary the body, and the thought varies. Touch a certain part of the brain, and the Bishop here becomes a cannibal. Touch a cannibal in the right place——"

"In his stomach," said the Undergraduate. "And he becomes as saintly as our Bishop, and as delicate a connoisseur in his cookery and wines. It follows then that the body is the cause of the soul. If A varies as B, then when A is nothing B is nothing."

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"Q. E. D.," added the Professor.

"The only object, then, we have to aim at is the improvement of the body. The mind will improve with it. Enlarge the body, and you enlarge the mind; weaken the body, and you weaken the soul."

"I have some Blues among my pupils," said the Professor, "and I shouldn't have thought what you say was so obvious."

"It is a good doctrine," observed the Undergraduate, flippantly. "The college cook is the real tutor. I shall feed on roast beef in order to pass the Littlego."

"It is easy to laugh," said the Philosopher. "Still, in time, what I say will be proved. Before another hundred years are past we shall know on what food to rear a statesman, and on what to rear a saint."

"Without claiming that title," said the Bishop, "I may say I hope champagne won't be excluded from the menu."

"This being so," went on the Philosopher, "it is plain that a body that doesn't eat starves the soul, and that both perish together."

"I don't feel inclined to contradict," said the Bishop, sipping his Benedictine; "still, you know—"

"Oh, yes, I know," answered the Philosopher. "You believe in the immortality of the soul so far as it is consistent with the comfort of the body."

"The Bishop is right," said a member of the party who had not yet spoken, a Negro Missionary, who was lionising in England at the time. "The soul lives after the body. Yet the Philosopher is right

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also; soul and body are unfortunately one." He spoke with an air of authority that riveted the attention of his hearers.

"That sounds contradictory," objected the Professor.

"So it does," answered the Missionary. "But it is nevertheless true. The body is transmuted into new forms; it never dies. As it changes, it carries the soul with it. In a sense, then, the soul survives the body; in another, both are equally immortal."

"Precisely," said the Philosopher. "Still, I can't say it interests me much to know what will become of either my soul or my body when the latter is food for worms."

"It is there that you make your mistake," answered the Missionary. "Let me assure you that the subsequent history of both is very interesting. The body becomes dust, and the soul goes into the dust. It springs up as the flower, and the soul blooms in the flower; it becomes bread, and the soul passes into the body of a man again. It is *very* interesting. We may be eating the soul of Newton, or drinking Shakespeare, at this very minute. Certain it is that we are assimilating *some* soul or other."

"You speak confidently," remarked the Professor, whose business it was to doubt everything.

"I am confident because I *know*," said the Missionary.

"By experience?" asked the Professor.

"By experience," answered the Missionary.

"Well," said the Philosopher, "a man who knows by experience that the soul lives after the body is a rarity."

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"I didn't say that exactly; I said that I knew by experience that as the body changes into new forms the soul still remains."

"Unchanged?"

"Unchanged."

"A battle-field must swarm with souls," said the Professor.

"So it does," answered the Negro Missionary.

"How do you tell? Can you see them?" asked the Philosopher.

"No; you must put yourself in a condition to comprehend them. You must assimilate them."

"Hard, that," said the Undergraduate.

"To civilised man it *is* hard," observed the Missionary; "nor to barbarous man easy."

"This is interesting," said the Undergraduate. "You have some stories to tell, Mr. Jeroboam"—that was the name of the Missionary.

"I have a very curious one, if you like to hear it," replied Mr. Jeroboam. "But you must promise to keep it dark."

They all promised.

"Ten years ago," said Jeroboam, "I was King of the Wapiti Islands. On those islands food is scarce—animal food, I mean. Vegetable food is so common that we weary of it. I cannot tell you how nauseous the bread-fruit is after you have had nothing else for six months. It is good enough as a change—but as a staple! Anyhow, I can tell you we welcomed the advent of a missionary."

"I understand," said the Philosopher.

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"I will join the ladies, if you like," said the Bishop eagerly.

"Don't move, Bishop," prayed the Missionary. "I assure you the tale's all right. It shows from what a depth of barbarism Christian agencies have rescued the poor heathen."

Thus adjured, the Bishop remained.

"Several missionaries," resumed Mr. Jeroboam, "came from time to time to our islands. We did not know why they came; nor did many of us trouble our heads about the question. A few inquiring spirits hazarded the theory that they were great criminals, expelled from their own country for horrible offences. But we did not refuse to associate with them for fear of contamination. We were willing to let bygones be bygones. They were welcomed even with effusion——"

"Of blood?" asked the Undergraduate.

"And we invariably celebrated their arrival with a great feast."

"I suppose you invited the missionaries to take part?" said the Professor.

"At any rate, they came," answered Mr. Jeroboam; "our hospitality would admit of no refusal. We gained great satisfaction from their presence. And, however little they wished to come, it was but a short time after their arrival when they ceased to show any reluctance. They may not have been actively hilarious, but they gave a silent consent to our proceedings."

He paused to light another cigar. Even the

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memory of those days seemed pleasurable; for his eyes twinkled as he told the story. The Bishop was apparently asleep. The rest of the audience was remarkably attentive.

"I ought to have told you that I was not yet king during the first few years of those visits. I was only the heir apparent; and thus had only the second choice of the dainties. Accordingly I never tasted genuine missionary till my father died, as he did about ten years ago, of a surfeit of preacher. I knew all about a missionary's wife and children as well as of the train of attendants that accompanied him. But, when I had been king a few months, and was nearly ready to kill myself for weariness of bread-fruit, a ship arrived with a cargo of evangelists on board. The whole island went down to welcome them. I myself received the chief missionary, and offered him the hospitality of my palace, while his retainers were distributed among the chiefs. The ship remained a week in the harbour, and we were obliged to content ourselves with a mere prospect of bliss. But no sooner did the vessel steer out of sight, than I proclaimed a great feast, clubbed my missionary, ordered the clubbing of the rest of the whites, and summoned my tribe to assemble in front of my palace to enjoy genuine happiness for the first time for years.

"It is needless to assure you that I did full justice to the banquet. If your theory is true, Philosopher, the missionary must have had a very spacious and comfortable soul; and, after my long abstinence, I

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could have found pleasure even in the thinnest and least appetising of evangelists. Suffice it to say, that I fared as sumptuously as Dives.

"When it was over, exhausted with my labours, I fell back helpless on the ground, more than satisfied with the result. Indeed, within ten minutes, I was ready to curse the missionary, body and bones—especially the latter, which I found horribly indigestible. Never in my life had I suffered as I did now. I rolled from this side to that, groaning and shrieking, expecting and hoping that every minute would be my last. The agonies of Jonah's whale were a trifle in comparison with mine; and it must be remembered that *he* succeeded in getting rid of his missionary, while mine resisted the most violent efforts to dislodge him. My comrades, equally tortured, were unable to render me the slightest assistance, though I promised to resign them the whole of my share in the next missionary that arrived. But there is no need to describe my torments further. You, Professor, and you, Bishop"—the Prelate opened his eyes and smiled—"have something to go by as an image of my distress. Suffice it to say that after about twenty-four hours of the extremest anguish I ever endured, I fell into a disturbed slumber, which was almost worse than my waking hours. Here, what I experienced would doubtless be called a nightmare. All my ancestors, in a long and confused procession, came and disported themselves before me. Whales, sharks, vampires, demons, evangelists, horrors of all kinds, congregated on the

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plain before my eyes in one bewildering panorama. After what seemed years, the vaporous visions gradually condensed, and shaped themselves into a single definite and consistent form. Before me stood a figure which, after some moments, I recognised, without the surprise which I should have felt when waking, as that of the missionary who was at that very time rollicking inside me. But, if not surprised, I was terrified; for there was a look of malicious triumph in his eye like that of a man who, though apparently totally defeated, is about to vanquish his enemy by a foul thrust. He looked, in fact, as though he were going to devour *me*, and not in the least as if he had just been through the process of being devoured. I was horror-struck.

"'Have you not vexed me enough?' I cried wildly.

"'Listen, Krakati'—that was my name in those days—'listen, Krakati, and tremble.'

"He raised his finger in token of authority. There was no need to bid me tremble; I shook like a palm-tree in a gale.

"'You have devoured me, and I have in return inflicted these agonies which tear you now. But this is only part of my revenge. When, in your eager haste to swallow your benefactor, you rushed upon your doom, you forgot the precautions which tradition had taught your ancestors to observe. Had you never noticed that, however hungry or hasty your father might be, he never failed to remove a portion of his victim's brain and bury it in the earth?'

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"'I had often noticed it,' I replied, 'but I fancied it a mere childish superstition.'

"'So fares it with all those who lightly despise the traditions of their elders,' said the Missionary. 'That custom was the salvation of your race; the palladium of your religion. Know that there is a membrane in the skull, called by the learned the *pia mater*, which contains the soul. This your fathers forbore to devour; for the wisdom of the ancients told them to eat the body but to spare the soul. But you, in your greedy haste, have eaten both; and hence the agonies you have endured. They were the throes of the birth of another soul within you; and that soul was *mine*. Henceforth there shall be two souls in your body—or rather, your body and your soul shall divide their empire with my body and my soul. There shall be everlasting war within your frame. You shall know all that I know, speak the language that I speak, preach the doctrines that I preach. When you walk I shall be walking, when you sleep I shall be sleeping, when you eat—and the food will not be so appetising as it was—I shall be eating. But this is not all. As the soul you have hitherto possessed was undeveloped and feeble, whereas mine was highly organized and strong, therefore, in all contests of the intellect and of morals I shall be victor; whereas in body you will be the stronger; though neither intellect nor body will be as it has been before. Several diseases, hitherto peculiar to civilised men, will swoop down upon you. You will have nerves—things of which you have never

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yet heard; and discontent, and a love of paradox, and a wish to solve the insoluble problem of the universe—all of which were hitherto strange to you. But you will retain your savage vices, your love of certain foods, which your new-born love of convention will forbid you to take, and your hatred of dress, which your new-born love of fashion will compel you to wear. You will be a Christian, yet you will retain all your old superstitions. You will be a missionary, and all the time you will be torn with an invincible sympathy for the customs you are bound to attack. Altogether, you will be a strange compound of incompatibles; a standing wonder to the world, and a terror to your old friends; and all because you did not take care to spare the *pia mater*.'

"As you may imagine, I was horror-struck at these words. But somehow I found courage to ask what would happen to my friends around me.

"'Surely,' I said, 'they will become Christians too?'

"'Not so,' answered the phantom. 'The *pia mater* is very hard to digest, and they, poor creatures, are unequal to the task. But you, who descend from a line of chiefs that have successfully devoured the toughest of missionaries, have a digestive apparatus that can assimilate *anything;* though even to you the *pia mater* has given some trouble. No; *they* will indeed receive nerves, and civilised diseases as far as they affect the body; but *you*—you are henceforward, to all intents and purposes, a missionary, and a missionary you will remain. Strive against

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this you may, resist it you cannot. This is my last appearance *outside* of you. I am just about to take up my abode *within* you. I will therefore say no farewell.'

"So saying, he vanished from my sight; but his presence was manifested by the most excruciating pangs I had yet experienced, which seemed most acute in the region of the head. So terrible were they, indeed, that I awoke."

"A strange dream," said the Undergraduate. "I have had some like it, though, after a bump supper. I remember a turkey returning on me much as your missionary returned on you."

"Are you sure it wasn't a goose?" said the Professor blandly. "But go on, Mr. Jeroboam; your story is really exciting, and it has a scientific value besides."

"Yes," murmured the Philosopher, under his breath, to the Musician, "the genesis of a lie is always a matter of scientific interest."

"When I awoke," resumed Mr. Jeroboam, "I found that the dream was, alas! too real. I was still capable of regretting the change, yet changed I was. To begin with, I found it difficult to speak to my late companions in the somewhat poor and ungraceful language I had hitherto found amply sufficient for my needs. I was always tending to drop into English: though hitherto I had hardly known a word of it beyond what was necessary for purposes of barter. My followers were astonished at my gift of tongues; but, deeming me to be possessed by some

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god, they as yet showed no active hostility to their old chief. If anything, they were awestruck. But when, after a day or two, I announced my intention of appearing in the missionary's clothes, their awe was succeeded by suspicion. Murmurings could be heard; they gathered in little knots, obviously discussing whether I was merely mad, or was plotting to overthrow their old customs. Shortly afterwards I began to preach to them. That sermon was the most remarkable ever delivered; for while I was impelled to utter the most delightful and Christian sentiments by a force I could not resist, my old nature was always dragging me in the opposite direction. Imagine a murderer who is offered the chance of his life on condition he supplies for the jail-chaplain; and you will have a feeble conception of what went on in my mind at that time. I urged my hearers to renounce cannibalism—while through it all I was conscious that cannibalism is the most delightful of occupations. I attacked heathenism with great eloquence; and I longed to be a heathen myself. I dilated on the advantages of clothes; and was always on the point of throwing my own off and calling for a sword-dance *in puris*. Altogether, painful and surprising as this sermon was to my audience, it was an agony to myself.

"Every Sunday, by an unconquerable but most annoying impulse, I was driven to preach to my old subjects. I take it as a strong testimony to their mildness and tolerance, as well as to the persistence of old custom, that they stood this sort of thing for

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eight weeks. It was not till after my eighth sermon —which was indeed enough to justify strenuous action—that they drew aside in a body and chose another chief. As to their subsequent secret consultations I can say nothing, for I had not a single friend left to play the spy for me. Had I retained my wives this would have mattered little; but on becoming the Missionary I had dismissed all my helpmeets but one, and she, finding life unendurable with so capricious and scrupulous a husband, very soon abandoned me to solitude and to ignorance of contemporary events. But I was soon to know what the result of those consultations was. On the ninth Sunday, having carefully dressed in my best suit of clothes, and put on the last of my white ties, I went forth to preach. At first I was inclined to imagine that my efforts were meeting with some success, for the whole population of the island was there to welcome me. But I was soon rudely undeceived. Hardly had I given out the hymn, when a significant movement on the part of the crowd gave me warning that it was unlikely that my carefully-prepared description of Daniel in the Lions' Den would be required. I was but too likely to play the part of Daniel in grim actuality; and I saw no reason to expect a miracle to deliver me. During the singing of the hymn my audience began to close in upon me, and inspect me—as I had often inspected missionaries myself—far more closely and critically than I liked. During the prayer, accordingly, I so far deviated from my usual practice as to keep one eye open;

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and well was it that I did so; for out of the corner of my eye I caught sight of a man behind me with a club raised to beat my—or rather the Missionary's —brains out. Suddenly turning, I dexterously avoided the blow, and springing upon the man, with one well-planted hit from the shoulder, levelled him with the ground. I then possessed myself of the club, but fortunately I recollected that there was a pistol in the missionary's waistcoat. Drawing this weapon, I aimed it at the crowd, and luckily brought down one of my most prominent assailants. Somewhat daunted by this incident, the mob hesitated for a moment. Remember that I still retained my barbarous activity, combined with the civilised cunning of the white man. I seized the favourable moment, hurled my club in the face of another man, turned, and fled like the wind. I knew that no one was likely to overtake me if I had a few yards start. I almost literally flew for half an hour, fortunately receiving but few blows from the sticks and stones that were hurled after me. A few reckless persons tried to arrest my course in front, but these I spilt by the violence of my encounter. Even in the midst of my flight I recalled that I had been a football-player in my youth at the University, and turned to good account the power of swerving then acquired. After a few minutes I had left my enemies well in the rear, and was able to slacken down in order to gain a second wind, and to think of a place to which I should direct my course. Recollecting a certain cave in the mountains I hurried thither, and after twenty

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minutes attained it. Here I knew I could defend myself against a storming-party, and I did not think my old tribesmen had the wit or the perseverance to organize and carry through a blockade. But no one followed me for any great distance.

"I shall not weary you with details as to the means by which I maintained my life during the next few months. Suffice it to say that the task of living called into requisition all the mental forces of both my personalities. But live I did, as of course my presence has already told you. It was some time before a new missionary ship arrived. I welcomed its advent with greater glee than ever I had shown in the old days; for I was hungrier than I had ever been in my life. I hastened down to the coast, and, giving myself out as a native missionary who wished to evangelise the neighbouring islands, succeeded in enlisting the help of the evangelist and the crew. They were struck with the purity of my English, and with the *sang froid* with which I wore the clothes they gave me. Curiously enough, I was sorrowful at leaving my native land, and wept as I saw its shores sink below the horizon. Still, love of life—or rather of my two lives—conquered; and, though I knew that simple and unsophisticated pleasures would be mine no more, I held on my way. My subsequent history you know."

He paused. The Bishop woke up and looked at his watch.

"It really *is* time to join the ladies," he observed. "Yours is a most entertaining story, Mr. Jeroboam."

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"One moment," said the Philosopher. "I should like to know your address from time to time, so that, when one of your two souls dies, if you have them, I may get information as to what happens to the other."

"With pleasure," said Mr. Jeroboam.

"I, too, should like to know one thing," said the flippant Undergraduate. "Which of your two selves is telling this tale? For if it is the Missionary, I shall extend to it a far less absolute credence than if it is the savage chief."

"You are welcome to choose which you like," said Jeroboam. "I confess that I cannot always tell, myself, which memory recollects these strange facts."

"Just one more question," said the Professor. "I should like to know whether, if the Missionary died, or if you got rid of him by some other means, you would go back to your island."

"Most certainly," said Jeroboam with absolute conviction. "Let me just get the Missionary outside of me, and I would eat him again—but this time I would take care first to cut out his *pia mater*."

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X.

LEX TALIONIS.

Lex non acquior ulla
Quam necis artifices arte perire sua.

IN the days of the Caliph Haroun al Raschid there was a law which ran as follows:—

"An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth; a hand for a hand and a head for a head; whatsoever evil a man doeth to his neighbour, the same shall be rendered to him again."

And all men praised the Caliph Haroun for making so just and wise a law. And, besides, there was a commandment that no sorcerer or wizard should be suffered to live.

Now there were at that time two lovers in Bagdad, whose names were Noureddin, the son of Mohammed, and Fatima, the daughter of Ahmed. Both were beautiful: the face of Noureddin was as the sun in his strength, and the face of Fatima was like unto the full moon in time of harvest. The limbs of Noureddin were as supple as the conscience of a Frank, and the limbs of Fatima like the whitest

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ivory. Fatima played the lute like the angel Israfel, and Noureddin sang like David the son of Jesse. And he sang thus while Fatima played:—

"As the palm-tree among the brambles, so is my love among the daughters.

"Her face beneath her veil is as the glorious heaven behind a cloud: the cloud passeth, and the glory shineth.

"Her hair is like unto silk, and her teeth like the ivory wall of Paradise.

"Her mind is like a rich corn-field, ripening for a fair harvest.

"All the young men love her, yet she loveth but one of them all.

"Happy is he upon whom she smileth; straightway he despiseth bonds and death.

"Her voice is sweeter than the bulbul's, and her breath like the odours of Arabia.

"Surely he that possesseth her envieth not the Just Haroun, for she is better than the crowns of kings."

Now it chanced when Noureddin had finished this song, whereof Fatima said that it was better than the song of Solomon the son of David, that they sat down together in the garden, and before them was a fair tree, like the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This tree beareth a certain fruit, and the juice of that fruit is called the soma-juice. Now being thirsty, for the day was hot, they stretched forth their hands, and took some of these fruits, little knowing on what small causes great effects do hang. For this same soma-juice, whereof they thus innocently tasted, is indeed at first pleasant to the taste, like unto the

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grapes of Eshcol; but afterwards, for a whole year, it giveth intolerable headaches, and is worse than the apples of Sodom.

Thus at first they were happy, and thought that nothing could exceed their joy; but in the morning they woke up in torment, as if all the fiends of Eblis were striving within their heads. Nor could they bear to see each other, nor to hear each other's voice.

After a week these tortures still endured; for the soma-juice giveth a headache that lasteth a whole year; nor is the headache so bad that cometh from learning the Koran by heart. Noureddin, indeed, was in such agony that he remembered not the commands of the Prophet, and thought of throwing himself into the river, when it chanced that his Uncle Barlaam came to see him. Now Barlaam was exceeding wise.

"Wherefore is thy head swollen, and why are thine eyes so pale?"

"Because Allah hath afflicted me," replied Noureddin.

"My son," said Barlaam, "Allah is great, and doeth according to his own will. Yet tell me how and wherein he hath afflicted thee."

"Then," said Noureddin, "oh, mine uncle, as I and Fatima, the daughter of Ahmed, were in the garden, we ate of a fruit that was as the full moon for beauty; and at first its taste was sweet in our mouths, and our eyes were opened. But next morning we woke with headaches as if we had been

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burning in the hell of the infidel, and the pain hath lasted till this day. Now, therefore, tell me what is to be done; for if this pain cease not, I shall slay myself."

Then said Barlaam,

"Grievous indeed is your affliction; yet you must bear it till it please Allah to release you; for it is Kismet."

Then answered Noureddin,

"Kismet me no Kismets; for I shall drown myself before a night is past."

Barlaam answered,

"Stay, my son; "for I have bethought me. There is a certain magician in this city, who cures headaches and all diseases; nevertheless, because of Haroun the Just and his laws he practiseth in secret."

"I care not for Haroun the Just and all his laws," said Noureddin. "Tell me where this magician lives, that I may find him."

Then Barlaam told him to go down a street called Crooked, and when he came to the third door on the right hand to knock thereat, first gently, then loud; whereupon a black slave would come to the door.

"When thou seest the slave," said Barlaam, "thou shalt put thy hands to thy lips, and say 'Sesame.' Then shall the slave take thee to his master, who, if thou promisest him great moneys, will do unto thee whatsoever thou desirest."

Then hope returned to the heart of Noureddin; and with hope came back the remembrance of

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Fatima the daughter of Ahmed. So he resolved to live.

"I thank thee, O Uncle Barlaam," he said.

"Give Allah the thanks, my son," said Barlaam; "for though he hath forbidden sorcerers and magicians to exist, yet, as they nevertheless exist, it is his will that we should make use of them."

So Barlaam went his way.

Then Noureddin rose up, and shaved and washed himself, and went to visit Fatima, the daughter of Ahmed, whom he found with a razor in her hand, ready to cut off her head for the agony caused by the soma-juice. When she saw Noureddin she turned away from him; for her eyes were red with weeping, and she was ashamed. But he went up to her, and took her hand, and told her all the words of Barlaam; whereupon hope returned to her heart, and her face was as the lily when the rain has just ceased, wet but comely.

Then she said,

"Oh, Noureddin, shall we not go to-night?"

He answered,

"Thou knowest, O moon of Bagdad, that it is forbidden in the Koran to visit sorcerers or magicians."

"Nay," she said; "it is written, 'Thou shalt not suffer a wizard to live;' wherefore the Commander of the Faithful is to blame because he hath not slain this wizard. Nay, more, we are bound to believe that this wizard is really dead, and none can blame us for going to pray at his tomb."

Then said Noureddin,

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"Oh, Fatima, thou art wise as Balkis, who came to prove Solomon with hard questions. As thou sayest, if this man had been a magician, Haroun al Raschid would have slain him; but he lives; and therefore will we go."

So at even they rose and went forth together. When they came to the street called Crooked, they went on to the third house on the right, and knocked first gently, then loud; whereupon a black slave came out, saying,

"What will ye?"

Noureddin put his hands to his lips, and said,

"Sesame."

And then the slave, not speaking, laid his hands upon his lips, and signed to them to follow.

The house and all its passages were dark, and the windows barred, for fear of Haroun al Raschid; for he had straitly commanded all his servants to search diligently till they found all magicians, that they might be put to death. Fatima and Noureddin often stumbled in the darkness, and their heads ached worse than ever with the shaking, yet they went on. After a time that seemed to them like days, so tedious were the windings and so great their pain, they came at last to a chamber which seemed a little less dark than the passages, by reason of a small shaded lamp burning in one corner. Here the black slave vanished, closing the door behind him.

After a few moments they discovered the magician sitting at a table, on which was the shaded lamp. In front of him were crucibles and instruments, but most

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strange were heaps of huge volumes, each big enough to contain the Koran many times over, bound and sealed, with strange letters on the outside. One of these great books was open, and the magician was reading therein by the light of the lamp. His long white beard hung down over the page, and he was very venerable to look upon. For some time he was so absorbed in his reading that he knew not that anyone had entered. Noureddin and Fatima gazed wonderingly upon him. Suddenly he looked up and saw them.

"And who are ye," he said, in a deep voice, "that visit unasked the cell of Hasan the Old? How did ye find your way hither?"

"We are Fatima, the daughter of Ahmed, and Noureddin, the son of Mohammed," said the young man; "and we are come because we need thy help."

"Stay," answered Hasan.

He rose from his seat, and made a circle on the floor.

"I know who ye are," he said after a pause. "Ye have eaten of the soma-juice, which indeed at first is like the grapes of Eshcol, but afterwards giveth tortures like those of the fiends of Eblis; and ye wish me to relieve you."

"Thou art right, my father," answered Noureddin; "we need thy help in very truth, for our pains are even such that if we be not aided we shall drown ourselves in the Great River this night."

"That would not relieve thee," said Hasan; "for the roots of the soma-tree go down to hell, and its

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branches reach to Al Araf; and its juice would torment thee even in Heaven."

"Then, my father," said Noureddin, "canst thou do naught for us?"

"I said not so, my son," replied Hasan. "I have knowledge in these books which would overcome Solomon himself. But the way to health is dangerous."

"We care not for danger," cried Fatima. "Only relieve us of these awful torments, and we care not."

"The way is also expensive," said the magician.

"Here," said Noureddin, "is a bag of zecchins, and thou shalt have another and a larger if thou cure us."

Hasan took the bag, counted out the zecchins, and tested each of them.

"The number is small," he said. "There are but two thousand, and what is that to me, who can make gold out of lead?"

Noureddin was about to say, "If thou canst make gold, why dost thou desire ours?" but he stopped and spoke not. But Fatima spoke.

"If thou canst make gold out of lead, thou canst surely cure our headache; and I will give thee with my own hands three thousand more zecchins and a load of lead besides."

Then said Hasan,

"Here is a book on which you must swear to keep your promise."

They both swore.

Then he said,

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"There is one way of cure, and only one; and it means death to us all if Haroun al Raschid hears thereof; for he hath straitly commanded all magicians to be put to death. Nevertheless, ye shall hear of the way. I shall cut off your heads, clean out the soma-juice which lingers in them and causes you this torment, and then with certain words put them on again; and ye shall suffer from headache no more. Choose then whether ye will lose your heads for half an hour, to lose your headaches for ever, or whether ye will cleave to your heads and keep your headaches."

"It is a hard question," said Noureddin; "for though a headache is bad, methinks no head at all is worse."

"Thou hast not tried the latter," said Hasan.

"Nor wish to try it," answered the young man. "Thou mightest forget to put it back again," he added.

"I care not," said Fatima. "If I die, I die; and if I live with this headache I don't live. Cut off my head if you like; cure it if you can; in any case you will deserve the two thousand zecchins." And with these words she took off her scarf, and bared her neck, which was like the ivory pillar in Solomon's temple.

Seeing that Fatima was determined, Noureddin said,

"If I die, I die; and if I live without Fatima I do not live. Slay us both; but kill Fatima first; for I will not survive her, but if she survives me, thou

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mightest waver, and keep her alive for thine own pleasure."

"Kill me first," said Fatima; "for if I saw Noureddin dead, I should be so miserable that I should wish to live."

"I shall kill neither," said the magician; "nevertheless, I will cut off thy head first, my daughter."

He drew out a couple of blocks, and bade them both kneel down and lay their necks in readiness to receive the stroke.

Now Hasan, though he loved money, was an exceeding honest man, and meant to do what he had promised. So, having drawn a pentagon on the floor, and pronounced certain mysterious words, he hung a bag open in front of their heads, and then drew his scimitar and smote off the head of Fatima, which fell into the bag ere she could utter a groan. Noureddin, seeing that Fatima was dead, submitted himself willingly to the stroke of the scimitar. The magician then began the process of cleansing each of the heads in turn. For this purpose he had to employ a stronger light, and to work with excessive care. He began by pronouncing certain mystic words, carefully and exactly read from one of his books, while the black slave held the two bags before him. After this he washed both heads in water, taking heed to hold their faces in the direction of Mecca; and then with his instruments he removed all traces of the soma-juice. This work took him some hours, for it was long before he ceased to detect some grains of the irritant in the brains of

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the two sufferers. At last, however, the cleansing process was completed, and he was about to restore the heads to their proper shoulders, when he was startled by an unexpected sound. For Fate rules over all the affairs of men; nor can anyone hope to escape its dominion.

That very night Haroun al Raschid, Jaffier his vizier, and Mesrour his chief of the executioners, going as their custom was through the city of Bagdad to learn what men were doing, chanced to light upon the street called Crooked. Here they found every house but one in total darkness; but through a chink in the shutters, a small stream of light peeped out from the house of Hasan the magician. Moved with the desire to learn, which in the vulgar is called curiosity, the Caliph came near, and, ordering Jaffier and Mesrour to be silent, applied his eye to the chink, and gazed through. He saw a sight which thrilled him with horror, for it seemed to him that a double murder had been committed. The magician was gloating over two severed heads, one that of a fair maiden, and the other that of a beautiful youth. He gazed fascinated for some moments, and then cried out in his wrath,

"By the beard of the Prophet, this man shall swing as high as the Prophet's coffin, or men call me the Just in vain!"

The magician heard him, and was thunderstruck. He sprang to his feet, and as he rose, overturned the lamp. For an instant he thought of rushing into headlong flight; but better thoughts restrained

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him. Could he not restore the heads before the Caliph came? He seized them, one in each hand, and held them to the shoulders; and then hurriedly pronounced the magic words,

> "Heads to shoulders back again,
> Nevermore to suffer pain:
> I, who slew you just before,
> Bring you back to life once more."

Scarcely had he finished, when the Caliph burst furiously into the room, followed by Mesrour and Jaffier, the latter of whom held a lantern.

"Seize that man!" cried Haroun, "and hale him away to death, for he shall hang as high as Haman!"

"Commander of the Faithful," said Hasan, "wherefore art thou so cruel to the meanest of thy servants?"

"For thy murders," answered the Caliph.

"Murders!" exclaimed Hasan; "who would dare to do murders in the city watched over by Haroun the Just?"

"Thou canst not flatter me," said the Caliph; "where are the two heads thou wast charming with thy accursed spells a few minutes ago?"

"Two heads, Commander of the Faithful!" cried Hasan in well-simulated surprise.

"Two heads, thou wretch," answered the Caliph, almost beside himself with rage at the obstinate denials of the magician.

"O Caliph," said Hasan, "Allah must have blinded thine eyes to see strange visions; for, by the

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beard of the Prophet, these two persons have been here the last three hours, in this very room, and will tell thee that they have seen no two heads, nor one head, in my hand all the time."

So saying, he drew the bodies from the floor, and presented them to the Caliph.

"Who are these?" said Haroun.

"The one is Noureddin, the son of thy servant Mohammed, and the other Fatima, the daughter of thy servant Ahmed," said Hasan.

"Thou dog, and thou son of an infidel!" cried Haroun; "here have thine arts overtaken thee! Look on these faces and on these bodies! Here is the head of a young man on the body of a maid, and the head of a maid on the body of a man. It is written, 'He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.'"

Hasan fell back thunderstruck. It was even so. In his haste he had confused the heads, and had created a monster the like of which was never seen. Oh, accursed fate! What tortures would be his; and how the fiends would jeer at him for using their spells so badly! He fell at Haroun's feet, crying,

"Have mercy upon me, Commander of the Faithful, and I will tell thee all!"

The Caliph's wrath had already turned to laughter; for the bewilderment of the magician, and the strange thing that had happened, were such as to excite laughter in the angry, and to dispel anxiety and grief.

"Speak," he said. "I say not that I will pardon thee; but I will spare thy life for one week, till I sit upon the judgment seat in my palace. Tell the

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truth, and seek not to hide. For that thou hast been sinning the sin of witchcraft is certain, and it is meet that thou shouldst die."

Then Hasan spoke and told the tale.

"My lord has the eyes that see through stone walls," he said. "It is impossible to hide aught from him; wherefore I will reveal all. These two persons, Noureddin and Fatima, having eaten of the soma-juice, which, as my lord knoweth, giveth headaches like apples of Sodom, came unto me to be relieved thereof. Now I, seeing their state, and knowing that there was but one way to relieve them, determined to cut off their heads and clear out the soma-juice therefrom, after which I would replace the heads upon their shoulders. And it was while I was clearing out their heads that thou, O Caliph, sawest me through the chink in the window; and I perceive that, startled by thy arrival, I have indeed replaced the heads, but upon the wrong shoulders! Accursed be this day, and the day when I was born!"

Then the Caliph replied,

"As thou hast confessed the truth, thou shalt not be hanged without a trial. As for these two wretches, I pardon them, for meseemeth they will have but a sorry time of it by thy contrivances. Mesrour, arrest this Hasan, and bear him away to prison, but let these two sinners go."

Hasan was thereupon seized, and carried off to prison. The Caliph and Jaffier went back to the palace, much marvelling at the extraordinary ways of Allah with men.

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"For," said Haroun, "this magician has long carried on his evil deeds, in spite of all our care; but the eye of Allah hath seen him, and hath at last discovered his wickedness."

"Even so, Commander of the Faithful," said Jaffier; "yet hath not Allah discovered his wickedness but by using thy watchfulness; for, hadst thou not been watching over thy city of Bagdad, Allah might even yet have been permitting these crimes to go on."

"It is Allah that causeth me to watch," said Haroun; nevertheless, he was pleased with the words of Jaffier.

At the end of the appointed week the Caliph Haroun al Raschid came forth and sat upon his throne of justice, to try Hasan for his crimes. And the fame of this strange story had gone out into far cities, so that a great concourse assembled to hear the trial. And on the Caliph's right sat his Queen Zobeide, and on his left was his sister Schemselnihar, whose face was as the full moon for beauty, at the least, men said so, but she had it always veiled. The two Princesses, having heard of the strange doings of Hasan, had come forth, moved with the desire to know, in order to hear the end.

Then the Caliph cried,

"Bring forth the prisoner Hasan, that we may see his face, and learn what he hath done." For Haroun had bidden Jaffier and Mesrour not to tell that he had discovered the wickedness of Hasan; and men thought that Mesrour and the guards had arrested him of their own wisdom.

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So Hasan was brought forth; and the eyes of all were fastened on him; for with his long white beard he was goodly to look upon. But chiefly the eyes of Schemselnihar, the sister of the Caliph, were fixed on him, and seemed as if they would not be removed; for she adored a man with a handsome face and long white beard.

Then the Caliph said to Mesrour,

"Who is this man, and what wickedness hath he committed?"

And Mesrour answered,

"Commander of the Faithful, thou hast ordered that all the wizards should be put to death. Wherefore I, and the men thou hast given me, going at night through this city, lighted on the street that is called Crooked, and, seeing a lamp burning in a certain house, we went and looked therein. And there we saw this man, having two heads on a table before him, one a maid's, the other a young man's. And he was scraping inside these heads with a sharp knife. Then said I, 'This is murder, and the Caliph shall know thereof.' Whereupon he sprang to his feet, and the lamp went out. Then, as I and the guards rushed into the room, we found him standing there, but with no heads; for the head of the maid was on the body of a man, and the head of the man on the body of a maid. So I said, 'This is sorcery and witchcraft,' and was for slaying him there. But he told so strange a tale that I deemed that none could judge thereof but thee, O Caliph; wherefore I have brought him before thee."

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This was the witness of Mesrour; and it was even as the Caliph had commanded him to deliver it.

Then said Haroun to Hasan,

"What hast thou to say for thyself?"

Now he had privily sent and bidden Hasan not to say how he had been discovered. So the magician spoke as follows:—

"Commander of the Faithful, I have always addicted myself to deep studies, perusing not only the Koran of the Prophet, wherein I have found many things too hard for the vulgar to understand, but the books of Solomon Ben David, and others far too many to count. Thus have I attained much strange knowledge, such as how to cure diseases, and how to tell the stars in their courses, and to bind jinns. Wherefore the common people have called me a magician; but in truth I am only a man who knows. Howbeit, I was known to some as a master of sciences. Now the other night, as I was reading in the 'Sayings of the Wise,' I was visited by two young people, who, having tasted of the soma-juice, were suffering the torments of the damned. And my books tell me that I could cure them, but in one way only, namely, by cutting off their heads, and cleansing them of the venom, and thereafter restoring their heads by reciting a verse from the chapter of the Koran entitled the Pig, revealed at Mecca. I had cut off the heads and cleansed them, and was about to pronounce the sacred words when thy servant Mesrour interrupted me; and in the confusion I mistook the heads, and put them back wrongly. For

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this I repent in sackcloth; but I have done nothing worthy either of death or of bonds."

So spake Hasan; and of what he said the more part was true, but some part was false. Then the Caliph said,

"We cannot tell how truly thou speakest till we have seen these two persons. Call Noureddin, the son of Mohammed, and Fatima, the daughter of Ahmed."

Whereupon a messenger departed to fetch them.

When they came, there was great excitement in the hall, and much craning of necks; for all were anxious to see this strange sight. But as they came up to the judgment seat, and prostrated themselves before the Caliph, curiosity was changed to pity, for they were both weeping and sobbing as if their hearts would break. The Caliph commanded silence, and cried,

"Which of you is Noureddin, and which is Fatima?"

They both answered,

"O my lord, we know not; nor indeed can anyone tell us who we are."

Then the Caliph said,

"It is a hard matter; nevertheless, it is a thing of great importance to know which each of you is; for either you are one or you are two; and it needeth two witnesses to bear testimony."

So he called his chief of the lawyers, and said,

"Decide for me which of these is Noureddin, and which is Fatima."

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But the chief of the lawyers replied,

"Allah only knows, O Commander of the Faithful."

Then Haroun was angry, and said,

"It is a strange thing, truly, if this case is not written in the laws, and if it be found in the laws, and thou be proved ignorant thereof, thou shalt be cut asunder, and thy house made a dung-hill."

Then the chief of the lawyers fell at the Caliph's feet, saying,

"Let not my lord be angry, but let him first make these people speak, that I may decide after. For a man is not his head, or we should not say a man's head, but a head instead of a man. Nor is his body the man; for how could a man *have* a body if he *be* the body? Wherefore it is a hard case, nor hath it been considered in the law-books. But the man is the soul, and the soul speaketh by the tongue; so that, if these creatures speak with their tongues, we may perchance know which is which."

"It is well spoken," said the Caliph. So he spoke again.

"Let the head of Noureddin, joined to the body of Fatima, speak first, and we can then tell which hath more of the soul in it, the head or the body, and thus learn which is which; and afterwards let the head of Fatima, joined to the body of Noureddin, speak, that we may know whether the head of a woman is more powerful than the body of a man."

So the head of Noureddin spoke first, and said what follows:—

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"Be it known unto thee, Commander of the Faithful, that Fatima and I——"

"Stay," said the Caliph; "thou seest, O chief of lawyers, that it saith Fatima and I; therefore it is plain that where the head is there is the man. For the head of Noureddin hath called itself Noureddin."

"It is even so," answered the chief of the lawyers.

"I was saying, O Caliph," went on the head of Noureddin, "that Fatima and I loved one another when I was Noureddin and she was Fatima."

"Stay," cried the Caliph. "Thou seest, O chief of the lawyers, that the head says, 'When I *was* Noureddin.' It is plain, therefore, that he *is* Noureddin no longer. Therefore, methinks, the head of Noureddin is not Noureddin, but Fatima."

"It is even so," answered the chief of the lawyers.

"When I was Noureddin," said the head, "I ate of the soma-juice, and suffered the torments of the damned. Whereupon I, and what was then the rest of me, went to Hasan to be cured; and at his house I suffered a great shock, though what it was I remember not. After it was over, I felt as one who has fainted, and recovering, has not come to himself, but to someone else. For I felt very strange. My fingers, which once were strong and powerful, were now delicate and white; but they were able to play the lute like those of the angel Israfel. This I thought no loss; yet, meeting an enemy in the street, and being smitten by him, I tried to return the blow, as of old I had willingly done, but my hands would not do their office. Whereupon I felt fear,

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and my heart trembled as it was not wont to do. So I said in my heart that I would run away; and thus I took to my heels, for I had often outrun my enemy in the past. But, when I began to run, methought my feet seemed marvellously slow, and refused to move as they had done in the past, and their stride was very short. At this my enemy, seeing that I could neither fight nor run, pursued me and treated me shamefully, saying that he would now return all the beatings I had given him in the past. And so, every day since, I have suffered grievous injuries at his hands. But, O Caliph, the cause of all these woes is not my enemy, but the magician Hasan, who hath bewitched me. Wherefore, I pray thee, punish him with all the tortures he deserveth!"

"At this the head of Noureddin wept bitterly; the Caliph also was distressed.

After a moment or two the head of Fatima began to speak.

"O Caliph," she said, "my sorrows are worse than the sorrows of that other. For, on returning from the house of Hasan, as I was looking in the mirror——"

"Stay," cried the Caliph. "Methinks this is plain proof. For if a face looks in the mirror, that face is the face of a woman. Therefore, oh chief of the lawyers, this that is now speaking is Fatima."

"It is even so," answered the chief of the lawyers.

"When I was looking in the mirror," went on the head of Fatima, "I saw that my face was indeed as beautiful as it had been before, when Noureddin

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called it as fair as the full moon; but alas! my dress was not as it had been. It was not my dress, nor did I feel myself in it. So I sat down and wept."

"Thou art a woman still," said the Caliph.

"But then I looked in the mirror and saw that tears disfigured my face, so that I ceased, and took my lute to console myself withal. But ah, to my sorrow, I could not play it, though I remembered how it soothed some part of me in the past; whereupon I became angry, and broke it—and it was strange how easy it was to break it. Then a desire took me to walk through the streets, wherefore I went forth. But some boys seeing me, jeered at me and threw stones at me, which made me angry, and I took a stone and threw it at them, a thing I had never been able to do before; and then I ran away, finding that I ran very fast, and did not lose breath as I had been wont to do. And, since then, I have been woeful at heart; for I shall never play the lute again; and though I can throw stones it consoleth me no whit. Wherefore, O Caliph, punish that wicked Hasan, who hath caused all this misery."

Then said the Caliph,

"Fear not, maiden, for he shall be punished as he deserveth."

Then, turning to Hasan, he said,

"O thou wicked magician, seest thou what evil thou hast done by thy sorceries? What shall be done unto thee? Doth not the law say, an eye for an eye, and a hand for a hand, and a head for a head; whatsoever evil a man doeth to his neighbour, the

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same shall be done to him in return? Wherefore, thou shalt lose thy head in return for the heads of Noureddin and Fatima; and hadst thou two, thou shouldst lose them both."

Here Hasan trembled and was in great fear; nevertheless he fell on his knees, and spoke.

"O Caliph, the law is even as thou sayest, a head for a head. Yet I say that no head has been lost. For everyone knows where the head of Fatima is: it is on the shoulders of Noureddin; and the head of Noureddin is on the shoulders of Fatima. Now no one can say that a thing is lost whereof everyone knows where it is. Thus then, Commander of the Faithful, I deserve not to lose my head, forasmuch as neither the head of Noureddin nor the head of Fatima is lost."

The Caliph would not at first hearken to Hasan, for he was angry. But at last he said to the chief of the lawyers,

"What says the law?"

"It is even as Hasan says," answered the lawyer; "if a man lose another man's head he must lose his own; but if the other head be not lost, the law says he is not to lose his head."

"Yet," said the Caliph, "I will slay this man, and still abide by the law. For whether he hath lost these heads or not, assuredly he hath cut off these heads; therefore shall his own be cut off."

Hasan trembled at these words; yet he spoke again for his life.

"O Caliph," he said, "the law saith not that

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whatsoever a man doeth to his neighbour the half thereof shall be done to him again, but the same, and the whole. Now I cut off these heads, but I put them on again, though I mistook the right bodies. Wherefore, it is not lawful for my head to be cut off unless it be put back again, and that living, even though it be on the wrong shoulders. Yea, and it will be a good exchange for any man to lose his own head and receive mine in return! Nevertheless, though what will have been my body will lose, I would rather be treated thus than be slain. Thou must therefore cut off my head and that of someone else, and put our heads on the wrong bodies, before the law will be satisfied."

Then the Caliph said to the chief of the lawyers,

"Is the law so?"

And the chief of the lawyers said,

"It is even as Hasan has said."

Then Haroun answered,

"Yet will I still slay this man and keep the law; for no man shall say that I break the laws I have myself made. There is a criminal in my prisons who hath committed murder; his head shall be exchanged with Hasan's, and after it is exchanged, I will hang them both, the one for murder, and the other for the crime we have now before us. So shall justice be satisfied, and the law kept."

Hasan trembled very violently again as he heard these words; yet he spoke for his life.

"Commander of the Faithful, the law saith that no man shall be hanged for a crime until it be proved

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that he committed it. Now, either you hang my head for the murder done by this criminal in thy prisons, and hang his head for what you call my crime; both heads being innocent; or you hang my body for the crime devised by my head, and his body for the crime of his head, both being guilty, yet guilty only of what they could not help doing, since the body must obey the head. And men would cease to call thee the Just if this were thy justice. Again, thou sawest that neither Noureddin nor Fatima knew which was which. Yet it was certain that they were *somebody*. Take heed, therefore, lest thou hang somebody who is neither myself nor thy criminal."

"Thou art a shrewd man to reason," said the Caliph.

"I ask but justice," answered Hasan, "and to suffer according to law. Nay, O Caliph, I have more to tell thee. I was promised by Fatima three thousand zecchins and a load of lead besides, if I cured her. Now it is unjust to kill me till I have the zecchins."

"Give him the zecchins," said the Caliph; "and then hang him."

"Nay," said Hasan, "I was promised them by Fatima."

"Take thou the zecchins and give them to Hasan," said Haroun to the head of Fatima.

The head of Fatima received the bag of money, and brought it to Hasan.

But he refused to take it.

"Thou saidst thou wouldst give the zecchins with

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thine own hands," he replied. "It is unjust to give them with Noureddin's hands; for these hands are not thine, but Noureddin's."

"Let Noureddin's head give them with Fatima's hands," said the Caliph.

"Then Fatima will not be giving them," answered Hasan. "It will be with her hands, but Noureddin will be giving them. It is unjust to kill me before I get the zecchins as I was promised."

"Thou art shrewd," said Haroun. "How shall we slay this man, and yet keep the law?" he said to the chief of the lawyers.

"There is one way that seems to me just," said the lawyer.

"What is that?" said the Caliph.

"Make him restore the heads to the right bodies, and then receive the zecchins from Fatima's own hands. After that, we can behead both him and the criminal, and then stick the heads on. If they live, well; and if they do not, then the Commander of the Faithful will know what to do."

"Yes, I will bury them," said the Caliph. "Thy counsel is as the counsel of Ahithophel," he went on. "I will make Hasan restore the bodies; and who knows but we may catch something from his talk?"

So he turned to Hasan, and said,

"Canst thou restore these heads to their right bodies?"

"I can but try, Commander of the Faithful; but they must first be willing."

Then said the Caliph to the head of Noureddin

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and body of Fatima, and also to the head of Fatima and body of Noureddin,

"Are ye willing to have your heads restored to the right places?"

"By what means?" they asked.

"By having your heads cut off again and put back."

"I am puzzled," said the head of Noureddin; "for I *am* the head; how then can my head be cut off?"

"Art thou willing to lose thy body, then?" asked the Caliph.

"I care not, so I can get another with more active arms and legs to fight my enemy, or at the least to run away from him."

In like manner spake Fatima. So the Caliph ordered the executioner to cut off the heads, saying to the magician,

"Take heed thou restore them; otherwise thou shalt perish in such tortures that the soma-juice is but the beginning of them."

When the heads were off, the magician received them, and, looking carefully to see that this time he was right, he pronounced the magic words:—

"Head to shoulders back again,
Never more to suffer pain:
I, who slew you just before,
Give you back to life once more."

At this the heads seemed to stick on; and, having pulled them hard to see if they were firm, he helped the two young persons to their feet.

"Commander of the Faithful," he said, "here they

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are, safe and sound. Ask them questions, for they will answer thee."

"Noureddin," said the Caliph, "how feelest thou?"

Noureddin shook himself, as one that is bewildered, or as one whose coat seemeth at first not to fit him. Then he replied,

"O Caliph, I am Noureddin, and these are my own arms and legs. And woe to my enemy if I meet him now!"

"Fatima," said the Caliph, "how feelest thou?"

"I feel as I used to feel, O Caliph," answered she; "that is, I feel as if I should be glad if I had a mirror to see how I look."

"Give Noureddin a sword from my armoury," said Haroun to Mesrour; "and give Fatima a golden comb and a silver mirror."

It was done; and then the Caliph handed to Fatima a bag of zecchins.

"I give these to thee as thy own; now, with thy own hands give them to Hasan."

She did so; and then, at a sign from Haroun, they two prostrated themselves, and departed, all men wondering at the strange things that had happened, and praising the Caliph for his justice and wisdom.

Then said the Caliph,

"It is time to finish this case, which hath already lasted the most part of a day. Let Hasan be slain before me."

Then Hasan trembled exceedingly; yet he spoke boldly for his life.

"O my lord, what have I done? I have cut off

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two heads, the owners being willing, and restored them to their places. I have slain nobody; nor can the same be done to me as I have done, unless someone is willing to have his or her head cut off along with mine, and put on again, if so be it may re-unite to the body."

"Is this the law?" said the Caliph to the chief of the lawyers.

"It is even as he saith," answered the lawyer. "The law saith, 'Whatsoever a man doth to his neighbour, the same shall be done to him in return.' Now if the neighbour was willing, and the man is now unwilling, the same is *not* done; for the willingness is a main part of what is done. An injury is no injury if he that receives it is willing to receive it. Therefore we must make the magician willing to receive his punishment before the punishment will be legal.

"And that, O Caliph, is not easy to do," said Hasan.

"Nay," said Haroun, "it is easy indeed. For if a man is unwilling to be hanged, one can easily make him willing by threatening him with burning alive."

"When I said *not easy*, O Caliph," replied Hasan, "I meant that it was easy for an unjust judge, but not easy for Haroun al Raschid."

Then said the Caliph,

"It seemeth as if this man knows the law so well that there is no way of catching him; for who is willing to lose his head along with him? Even that murderer in our prisons is unwilling to die."

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And, for the first time in his life, the Just Caliph was perplexed; nor could the chief of the lawyers aid him; when suddenly, Schemselnihar, the sister of Haroun, who had been sitting on his left side watching the trial, said,

"O Commander of the Faithful, I see a way out of this perplexity."

"What is that, my sister?" said Haroun; "it must indeed be a shrewd one, for both I and the chief of the lawyers are perplexed."

"This is the way, O Caliph," said Schemselnihar. "I have looked upon Hasan, and behold, he is a comely man. And I have heard his answers, and, behold, he is a wise man. Wherefore I, who have for years been waiting for a man who is both comely and wise, have come to love him, and to admire him. And I am willing to die with him or for him. Let the executioner therefore smite off both our heads, and if he can reunite them, let him do so; if he cannot, well. For if he can, then Hasan has fulfilled the law; and if he cannot, then I die with him, without whom it were agony to live. And even if he change our heads, methinks, as Hasan says, the gain were mine!"

"Sister," said Haroun, "methinks thou hast lost thy head already. This is madness!"

"Not so, O Caliph; I have but lost my heart. I am willing to lose all else for Hasan, even my head; but I am not mad. So let the executioner proceed."

"It shall not be," cried Haroun.

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"Nay, O Caliph," said Schemselnihar, "if this be not, then will I not be; for I will die."

Now Haroun loved his sister much; and seeing that she was in earnest, he consented.

"Canst thou," he said to Hasan, "teach me the words which will restore the heads to the bodies?"

"That can I," answered the magician. "Still, lest an awkward error should be made, it seemeth to me that it were better to do nothing at all. For, if our heads are cut off and then restored, what difference is there from leaving them as they are? Why go through all this trouble and run this risk? *We* have no soma-juice to be cleared out of our heads. And does not the law say that he who steals and then restores had better never have stolen? Why, then, not leave us precisely as we are?"

Schemselnihar said this was wisely spoken—and that it was indeed the wisest thing Hasan had said yet.

Then said the Caliph to the chief of the lawyers,

"Is this the law?"

"It is even as Hasan hath said, O Caliph," replied the lawyer.

"Then," said the Caliph, "I will even leave you as ye are. But that I will not do either; for I will make you marry, and make you one instead of two."

"Yes," said Schemselnihar, "for if Hasan has not my head, he has my heart, and I have his."

So the Caliph married them, and Prince Hasan and the Princess Schemselnihar were the fairest pair that ever wedded. And, though men said there was

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some difference of years between them, there was never any other difference that anyone could see; for their thoughts were always so in agreement, that men said Hasan had given his head to Schemselnihar.

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XI.

PLEASURE AND PAIN.

THE epoch-marking invention was perfected at last; the labour of years was finished; and, as he gazed upon the result of his self-denying toil, Dr. John Williams let his head fall upon his hands, and all but wept for joy. Confused hopes and memories surged upon his mind in wild tumult. Wealth would be his, and fame; but his chief feeling was one of serene confidence that the great cause of humanity would be advanced, and that science would be benefited. Simpson will be remembered for ever as the great alleviator of pain; but he, Williams, would be remembered equally long as the first man who had succeeded in accurately measuring and registering pain for the instruction of posterity.

It was years since the first idea of his great invention had flashed across his mind. As in the case of Newton's discovery of gravitation, it was a simple every-day incident that had given the decisive turn to his thoughts, and transformed him from a commonplace general practitioner into an enthusiastic ex-

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plorer and inventor. While engaged on the trivial round of a doctor's life, he had found occasion, like so many physicians before him, to use the thermometer, which registered so simply yet so marvellously the temperature of the sick man. There was nothing extraordinary about the scene; it was a mere case of double pneumonia, which ended, naturally enough, in the death of the patient. Yet Williams never forgot it. As he read the instrument, the thought passed through his mind, "Why cannot I register the degree of pain he suffers as accurately as I can register his temperature or the beatings of his pulse?"

Many such thoughts occur to us, run through the mind, and are forgotten; but this was one of those that bear fruit, some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred-fold. At first it was the merest wonder, then it grew into a wish, and finally it became a resolve. Before he left the sick-room, Williams said to himself, "I will invent an algometer, which shall mark degrees of pleasure and pain as the thermometer marks degrees of heat and cold."

The immense scientific utility of such an instrument could not fail to strike him at once. Instead of being compelled to rely on the vague statements of patients as to the degree and locality of their sufferings, the physician of the future could infallibly detect malingering or hysteria, and substitute exact statistics for loose and general deductions. Many strange things would happen. We should be able to test the exact value ascribed by the martyr to his

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creed, as precisely as Walpole knew the price of his venal politicians. Punishments in schools, prisons, or reformatories could be regulated to fit the crime more accurately than in Mr. Gilbert's Japan. All this, and more also, would follow if only the algometer could be made. Thenceforward the idea dominated him, and haunted even his dreams, with the force of a selfish impulse in a low nature.

Fortune stood Williams in good stead. A rich relative died, and left him wealth. There was no need longer to tend the slighted trade of a practitioner, and wearily meditate the thankless nature of man. Williams sold his practice, and thenceforward devoted money, time, and soul to his one absorbing purpose. His first efforts were failures, but failures of that hopeful kind which stimulates instead of depressing. Slowly and painfully he unlocked the arcana of Nature, and at length struck upon a principle that would work, though fitfully and erratically.

The months flew by, and the pale face and sunken eyes of the inventor told their tale of weakening health and failing nerve. His wife remonstrated in vain. The midnight oil was burnt, and the experiments were plied, until at length an instrument was made, clumsy indeed and inaccurate, and requiring anxious care to perfect; but in all essentials the real thing. Williams showed it to his wife in triumph.

"See," he said, "how it vibrates as I bite my finger!"

"I don't like it," she cried. "It looks uncanny.

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Why have you spent all these years and made yourself ill over a thing like that?"

"It means fame, dearest, and money."

"We don't need money," she answered; "and as for fame, I shall never love you better than when we first married, when you were a G.P. in Bermondsey."

"You don't care for science," he replied.

"No," she answered; "but now that it is finished perhaps you will put away your horrid chemicals and electrical machines, and let us see more of you. Let me dust out your den. It is filthy."

"No," he said; "leave it alone. The thing is only half done. It wants perfecting slowly and surely."

Tears filled his wife's eyes. She hated the algometer, and would have liked to burn it; but she knew remonstrance was useless.

The work of perfecting was harder than Williams had anticipated. The most perverse and irritating obstacles arose; as he mended one defect another seemed to start up, and he sometimes despaired of ever attaining that exquisite balance in all the parts which he had made his aim. He became more of a recluse than ever. More and more did the instrument absorb him, and more and more, in his zeal for perfection, did he sacrifice himself and others to it. Children were born to him; they were *corpora vilia* Providentially sent on which he could try his experiments, and by which he could check his results. His wife was young and lovely; he gradually wearied her with his endless unintelligible questions. When she had a headache, instead of treating her

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medically, he would strap the strange uncanny instrument to her temples, adjust the electrical wires and appliances, and mark with rapture how the algometer leapt and danced in response to each paroxysm of pain. Williams kept a diagram of his wife's headaches, and informed her that her "curves of agony" were most interesting to study. Similarly, when the children had the toothache, the remorseless engine was fastened on their jaws, and throbbed in exact harmony with the pulsations of the tortured nerve. Mrs. Williams could never persuade her husband to send the children to the dentist. Even as it was, the precious moments of anguish were all too short for the enthusiastic man of science, and he could never bring himself to shorten them still further. It is due to Williams to admit that he was equally severe with himself. His own neuralgic attacks, and they were many, were ruthlessly pressed into the service of knowledge; and had calculus racked him he would have measured the severity of the shocks on his beloved algometer. He went even further. Though naturally a devoted lover of animals, he sacrificed his feelings to the noble cause, and watched with a stoical composure the writhings of a favourite Newfoundland dog, which, as his instrument made its slow way toward perfection, he used to prick with red-hot needles for hours at a stretch. Never, indeed, did a scientific investigator sacrifice more on the altar of research than Dr. Williams. If he could not command success, he emphatically deserved it. There was some danger that he might even lose

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natural human feeling in the chase; a loss which, like Torquemada, Williams would perhaps, if necessary, have endured.

Experience soon taught him that it was better to manufacture a pair of complementary instruments, by which means, though the principle remained the same, the convenience was increased. The one, which registered pleasures, was called the hedonometer; and its zero, marking a neutral state of indifference, accurately corresponded with the zero of the algometer, which registered degrees of pain ranging impartially from inconvenience to intolerable agony. The positive degrees of the latter, therefore, were simply the convenient expression of negative degrees on the former. In testing his hedonometer Williams was as scientifically oblivious of the means as in the case of the other instrument. With apparent caprice, but with real method, he would give his children sweetmeats one moment to register the degree of their delight, and take them away the next moment to observe how, as their countenances fell, the faithful instrument fell also. He would promise them gifts, and afterwards refuse them, in a way which exasperated the children, who were unacquainted with the noble motive which really actuated him. The boys never returned from school but their father strapped on the apparatus to detect the amount of pleasure they experienced; and it is a curious fact that as they grew older, and knew their father better, the hedonometer fell continuously lower on these auspicious occasions. This phenomenon was somewhat

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baffling to Williams, who, unconscious of any reason why they should dislike him, was inclined to suspect his instrument of a certain inexplicable inconstancy; and spent many fruitless hours in searching for a non-existent defect.

Williams' wife was at one time childishly fond of him; and he took an interest in saying the bitterest things to her he could think of, which he always followed up with a reconciliation, in order that the hedonometer might duly register her transports. Like the children, Mrs. Williams failed to appreciate her husband's apparently uncertain temper. While her love for him lasted, she ascribed it to his ill-health, and did her utmost to forgive him. But she was mistaken. The philosopher well knew what he was about. As Jean Paul says, there is no joy so keen as the joy of an affectionate nature when it is reconciled after a quarrel with one it loves. Williams knew this fact well; and accordingly he marked the joys of his wife when he forgave her as the highest point attainable on his instrument.

Shortly before the time at which our story opens, Williams, or perhaps rather his wife, had been through a period of great sorrow. Their youngest child, a girl, and one of the sweetest, dearest things that ever prattled to a doll, or said its prayers at a mother's knee, suddenly fell ill; and the doctors speedily resigned all hope. Williams felt the grief acutely; and no wonder; for the mother obstinately refused to allow him to measure the child's pain with scientific precision.

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"Don't you see she is in agony?" cried the distracted mother.

"Of course I do, my dear," replied Williams soothingly; "but surely that is only a reason why I should try to find out exactly how much she suffers. Great harm is done by vagueness and rule-of-thumb guesswork. Now, if you will only let me use my algometer——"

"You shall never use the horrible thing on little Mary," cried the foolish woman, plucking up, for the first time in her life, a little spirit in the presence of her husband.

"But I must and will use it," he answered, surprised at her vehemence. "You have no love for science."

"No," she cried furiously, all the pent-up feelings of years rushing forth at last in a torrent of anger. "I hate your science, and I hate, hate, hate your dreadful algometer. It has made you a perfect devil; it has killed every human feeling you ever had. You have made the children loathe the very sight of you, and fly from you as if you were possessed; and it has made me curse the day I ever married you. Are you a man?" She looked at him and her eyes blazed. "I tell you, if you try your abominable instrument on little Mary, after you have tried it on everybody else till they are weary, I believe I shall kill you!"

Williams was justly angry. Such an opportunity might never occur again. For a moment he thought of insisting on his rights; but, seeing a look in his wife's face the like of which he had never seen there

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before, he thought it prudent to give way. He turned on his heel, and, carrying the precious algometer under his arm, went back to his den.

"Women are so childish!" he said to himself. "As if it could make the slightest difference to the child's health whether I tried the thing on her or not! I can't imagine what has come over Mary. But she has no love of science."

The minutes grew tedious, and he was reduced to trying the instrument on his own forehead. He found it registered a high degree of vexation. His wife, by the most incontrovertible evidence, had irritated him considerably. He took a soothing draught; and after a few minutes, was relieved to find that he had gone down several degrees.

That evening little Mary died. Mrs. Williams was in an agony of grief; so prostrated, indeed, that she made no resistance when her husband strapped the algometer to her head, and observed that it marked within a degree or two of the utmost pain endurable by a human being. Even poor Rover, when the red-hot needles were torturing him, had not sent the needle so high. Williams entered the result accurately in his note-book; the experiment had been highly satisfactory. It was evident that the algometer was equal to all demands likely to be made upon it.

Strangely enough, it was the death of his child that supplied him with the one or two ideas requisite for giving the final touches to his apparatus. His powers, like those of a man who knows he is going to

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be hanged in a fortnight, were wonderfully sharpened. He spent the forty-eight hours that followed in finishing the two instruments; and then, with a heart surcharged with the joy only granted to successful inventors, buried his face, as we have said, in his hands, and all but wept for gladness. Columbus may have felt thus when, after weeks of voyaging, he first sighted the islands of the west.

If constant failure has been the ruin of many men, success has been the ruin of others. Few persons are more unhappy than those who have achieved the object of their ambition early in life, and then must perforce fold their hands and weep because there are no more worlds to conquer. Should a man become Archbishop of Canterbury at thirty, he would probably renounce the Church, from sheer satiety, at forty, and take to the army or the Bar, in order to have something to aim at. Morphy, the chess-player, having beaten every opponent before he reached the age of twenty-five, gave up the game. We are inclined to envy the lot of the international football-player; but in a few years he will be the most pitiable object on earth—the man who has attained the summit of human glory too early.

Something of this kind was the fate of Williams. His algometer had been his be-all and his end-all; and he had now reached his goal. After his child was buried, he went back to his den and looked around him. The instrument stood before him, incapable of being improved, and, unlike some things

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that do not admit of improvement, perfect. It would register every degree and every kind of pain. Williams felt a vacancy, a longing. Time hung heavy on his hands. Not for years had he had nothing to do. He lit a cigar; but he did not find the accustomed solace. "I am out of sorts," he muttered to himself. He felt his pulse, which was irregular, and tried his algometer, which marked a serious degree of ennui. He was like a man used to violent exercise, who is compelled by circumstances to stay idly indoors.

"After all," he said, with a forced cheerfulness, "there must be plenty of inventions yet unmade, even though my invention is finished. Why should I not contrive an electrical telescope for seeing round the world, or a flying machine, or something of that kind?"

But even as he spoke, he felt the futility of the thought. He knew too well that he had literally spent the last drop of his energies on his one mania, and that he would make no more inventions to his dying day. Nay, he even feared that if by some unlucky chance the algometer should be broken, he might not be able to remake it.

The next few days were a repetition of the first. The hours were terribly tedious; for he had nothing to do—nothing, except to take out the algometer at short intervals and test his growing boredom by it. He was forced to try it on himself; for his wife, asserting her new-found independence, refused to allow him to experiment on the children or the

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servants, and threatened to expose him if he ventured any of his old practices on dumb animals. Strange to say, also, he felt no inclination to publish his results; a dream which had in the past sustained him through many weary hours. Occasionally, it is true, he would take pen in hand to write his long-anticipated letter to one of the scientific journals—that letter which was to bring him the fame of an Edison or a Röntgen; but he never advanced beyond a few opening sentences, and at last, in a fit of unreasoning petulance, he flung his note-books into the fire. Something told him that the renown for which he had sacrificed so much could never be his. Meanwhile, the algometer, which in his restlessness he was constantly taking out to test his state, went up higher and higher, until the needle threatened to overpass the limits of agony which he had once thought amply sufficient.

To ennui was gradually added remorse. As he sat in his lonely laboratory, which his wife and children shunned like a plague-stricken city, he grew to see the vastness of the sacrifice he had made for his accursed invention; a sacrifice not of health only, nor of pleasure, but of natural affection, and of all that should accompany old age, as honour, love, obedience, troops of friends. His mind, relieved from the burden of maniacal devotion to one end, concentrated itself upon these things with appalling tenacity, until, as he thought of the years of deserved loneliness that lay before him, the idea became unbearable, and he feared for his reason. That worst

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of all horrors was now upon him—the dread of insanity; and, as so often happens, that dread, leading to morbid self-inspection, aided its own development. At length, snatching his algometer, in a frenzy of excitement, he watched the fatal needle creep higher and higher, till it rose perilously near the maximum. What would happen if it passed that point? He knew well the fatal certainty of his contrivances. The needle *must* rise as the misery increased; and, gentle as its course appeared, he knew that it was irresistible. In his horror—which added to his wretchedness, and itself tended to drive the pointer on—he had not the presence of mind to remove the apparatus from his temples. With staring eyes he watched the needle rise to the fatal point—he saw it quiver as though hesitating before the final ruin—there was a crash that all but split his brain—and he knew no more.

When he awoke to consciousness, his wife and children were bending over him. His wife wore a look on her face which he had not seen there for years—a look of love and tender anxiety.

"Where am I?" he murmured feebly.

"Here in your laboratory," she said.

"Ah yes," he replied. "I remember now," and closed his eyes.

"I heard a crash," she answered, "like an explosion, and I thought you might be hurt; "so I ran along here, and found you lying on the ground."

"Is the algometer broken?"

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"There is some splintered glass on the floor," she said.

"Thank God," he murmured weakly; whereupon his wife bent down and kissed him as she had done when they were happy together.

"Are you glad the instrument is broken?" he asked.

"Very glad," she replied.

"Then," he said, "we will see how happy."

He rose, went across the room, and brought out the hedonometer.

"Come, boys," he cried, "join hands, and remember that the algometer is broken."

All four joined hands. Williams set the instrument going, and whether it was that one of the boys shook it, or that it was not equal to registering such an extreme of joy as they all felt at that moment, the needle rose with extraordinary rapidity, reached the maximum, quivered—and with a crash the hedonometer lay in fragments upon the floor.

THE END.

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